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HISTORY OF IRELAND.

HISTORY OF IRELAND:

Cuculain and his Contemporaries.

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BY

STANDISH O'GRADY.

B. 49

" He spake not a boasting word,
Nor vaunted he at all,
Though marvellous were his deeds."

ANCIENT BARD.

VOL. II.

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EARLY BARDIC LITERATURE, IRELAND.

SCATTERED over the surface of every country in Europe may be found sepulchral monuments, the remains of pre-historic times and nations, and of a phase of life and civilisation which has long since passed away. No country in Europe is without its cromlechs and dolmens, huge earthen tumuli, great flagged sepulchres, and enclosures of tall pillar-stones. The men by whom these works were made, so interesting in themselves, and so different from anything of the kind erected since, were not strangers and aliens, but our own ancestors, and out of their rude civilisation our own has slowly grown. Of that elder phase of European civilisation no record or tradition has been anywhere bequeathed to us. Of its nature, and the ideas and sentiments whereby it was sustained, nought may now be learned save by an examination of those tombs themselves, and of the dumb remnants, from time to time exhumed out of their soil—rude instruments of clay, flint, brass, and gold, and by speculations and reasonings founded upon these archæological gleanings, meagre and sapless.

For after the explorer has broken up, certainly desecrated, and perhaps destroyed, those noble sepulchral raths; after he has disinterred the bones laid there once by pious hands, and the urn with its unrecognisable ashes of king or warrior, and by the industrious labour of years hoarded his fruitless treasure of stone celt and arrow-head, of brazen sword and gold fibula and torque; and after the savant has rammed many skulls with sawdust, measuring their capacity, and has adorned them with some obscure label, and has tabulated and arranged the implements and decorations of flint and metal in the glazed cases of the cold gaunt museum, the imagination, unsatisfied and revolted, shrinks back from all that he has done. Still we continue to inquire, receiving from him no adequate response, Who were those ancient chieftains and warriors for whom an affectionate people raised those strange tombs? What life did they lead? What deeds perform? How did their personality affect the minds of their people and posterity? How did our ancestors look upon those great tombs, certainly not reared to be forgotten, and how did they—those huge monumental pebbles and swelling raths—enter into and affect the civilisation or religion of the times?

We see the cromlech with its massive slab and immense supporting pillars, but we vainly endeavour to imagine for whom it was first erected, and how that

greater than cyclopean house affected the minds of those who made it, or those who were reared in its neighbourhood or within reach of its influence. We see the stone cist with its great smooth flags, the rocky cairn, and huge barrow and massive walled cathair, but the interest which they invariably excite is only aroused to subside again unsatisfied. From this department of European antiquities the historian retires baffled, and the dry savant is alone master of the field, but a field which, as cultivated by him alone, remains barren or fertile only in things the reverse of exhilarating. An antiquarian museum is more melancholy than a tomb.

But there is one country in Europe in which, by virtue of a marvellous strength and tenacity of the historical intellect, and of filial devotedness to the memory of their ancestors, there have been preserved down into the early phases of mediæval civilisation, and then committed to the sure guardianship of manuscript, the hymns, ballads, stories, and chronicles, the names, pedigrees, achievements, and even characters, of those ancient kings and warriors over whom those massive cromlechs were erected and great cairns piled. There is not a conspicuous sepulchral monument in Ireland, the traditional history of which is not recorded in our ancient literature, and of the heroes in whose honour they were raised. In the rest of Europe there is not a single barrow, dolmen, or cist of which the

ancient traditional history is recorded; in Ireland there is hardly one of which it is not. And these histories are in many cases as rich and circumstantial as that of men of the greatest eminence who have lived in modern times. Granted that the imagination which for centuries followed with eager interest the lives of these heroes, beheld as gigantic what was not so, as romantic and heroic what was neither one nor the other, still the great fact remains, that it was beside and in connection with the mounds and cairns that this history was elaborated, and elaborated concerning them and concerning the heroes to whom they were sacred.

On the plain of Tara, beside the little stream Nemanna, itself famous as that which first turned a mill-wheel in Ireland, there lies a barrow, not itself very conspicuous in the midst of others, all named and illustrious in the ancient literature of the country. The ancient hero there interred is to the student of the Irish bardic literature a figure as familiar and clearly seen as any personage in the Biographia Britannica. We know the name he bore as a boy and the name he bore as a man. We know the names of his father and his grandfather, and of the father of his grandfather, of his mother, and the father and mother of his mother, and the pedigrees and histories of each of these. We know the name of his nurse, and of his children, and of his wife, and the character of his wife, and of the

father and mother of his wife, and where they lived and were buried. We know all the striking events of his boyhood and manhood, the names of his horses and his weapons, his own character and his friends, male and female. We know his battles, and the names of those whom he slew in battle, and how he was himself slain, and by whose hands. We know his physical and spiritual characteristics, the device upon his shield, and how that was originated, carved, and painted by whom. We know the colour of his hair, the date of his birth and of his death, and his relations, in time and otherwise, with the remainder of the princes and warriors with whom, in that mound-raising period of our history, he was connected, in hostility or friendship; and all this enshrined in ancient song, the transmitted traditions of the people who raised that barrow, and who laid within it sorrowing their brave ruler and defender. That mound is the tomb of Cuculain, once king of the district in which Dundalk stands to-day, and the ruins of whose earthen fortification may still be seen two miles from that town.

This is a single instance, and used merely as an example, but one out of a multitude almost as striking. There is not a king of Ireland, described as such in the ancient annals, whose barrow is not mentioned in these or other compositions, and every one of which may at the present day be identified where the ignorant ple-

beian or the ignorant patrician has not destroyed them. The early History of Ireland clings around and grows out of the Irish barrows until, with almost the universality of that primeval forest from which Ireland took one of its ancient names, the whole isle and all within it was clothed with a nobler raiment, invisible, but not the less real, of a full and luxuriant history, from whose presence, all-embracing, no part was free. Of the many poetical and rhetorical titles lavished upon this country, none is truer than that which calls her the Isle of Song. Her ancient history passed unceasingly into the realm of artistic representation; the history of one generation became the poetry of the next, until the whole island was illuminated and coloured by the poetry of the bards. Productions of mere fancy and imagination these songs are not, though fancy and imagination may have coloured and shaped all their subject-matter, but the names are names of men and women who once lived and died in Ireland, and over whom their people raised the swelling *rath* and reared the rocky cromlech. In the sepulchral monuments their names were preserved, and in the performance of sacred rites, and the holding of games, fairs, and assemblies in their honour, the memory of their achievements kept fresh, till the traditions that clung around these places were inshrined in tales which were finally incorporated in the Leabhar na Huidhré and the Book of Leinster.

Pre-historic narrative is of two kinds—in one the imagination is at work consciously, in the other unconsciously. Legends of the former class are the product of a lettered and learned age. The story floats loosely in a world of imagination. The other sort of pre-historic narrative clings close to the soil, and to visible and tangible objects. It may be legend, but it is legend believed in as history never consciously invented, and growing out of certain spots of the earth's surface, and supported by and drawing its life from the soil like a natural growth.

Such are the early Irish tales that cling around the mounds and cromlechs as that by which they are sustained, which was originally their source, and sustained them afterwards in a strong enduring life. It is evident that these cannot be classed with stories that float vaguely in an ideal world, which may happen in one place as well as another, and in which the names might be disarrayed without changing the character and consistency of the tale, and its relations, in time or otherwise, with other tales.

Foreigners are surprised to find the Irish claim for their own country an antiquity and a history prior to that of the neighbouring countries. Herein lie the proof and the explanation. The traditions and history of the mound-raising period have in other countries passed away. Foreign conquest, or less intrinsic force

of imagination, and pious sentiment have suffered them to fall into oblivion; but in Ireland they have been all preserved in their original fulness and vigour, hardly a hue has faded, hardly a minute circumstance or articulation been suffered to decay.

The enthusiasm with which the Irish intellect seized upon the grand moral life of Christianity, and ideals so different from, and so hostile to, those of the heroic age, did not consume the traditions or destroy the pious and reverent spirit in which men still looked back upon those monuments of their own pagan teachers and kings, and the deep spirit of patriotism and affection with which the mind still clung to the old heroic age, whose types were warlike prowess, physical beauty, generosity, hospitality, love of family and nation, and all those noble attributes which constituted the heroic character as distinguished from the saintly. The Danish conquest, with its profound modification of Irish society, and consequent disruption of old habits and conditions of life, did not dissipate it; nor the more dangerous conquest of the Normans, with their own innate nobility of character, chivalrous daring, and continental grace and civilisation; nor the Elizabethan convulsions and systematic repression and destruction of all native phases of thought and feeling. Through all these storms, which successively assailed the heroic literature of ancient Ireland, it still held

itself undestroyed. There were still found generous minds to shelter and shield the old tales and ballads, to feel the nobleness of that life of which they were the outcome, and to resolve that the soil of Ireland should not, so far as they had the power to prevent it, be denuded of its raiment of history and historic romance, or reduced again to primeval nakedness. The fruit of this persistency and unquenched love of country and its ancient traditions, is left to be enjoyed by us. There is not through the length and breadth of the country a conspicuous rath or barrow of which we cannot find the traditional history preserved in this ancient literature. The mounds of Tara, the great barrows along the shores of the Boyne, the raths of Slieve Mish, and Rathcrōgan, and Teltown, the stone caiseals of Aran and Innishowen, and those that alone or in smaller groups stud the country over, are all, or nearly all, mentioned in this ancient literature, with the names and traditional histories of those over whom they were raised.

There is one thing to be learned from all this, which is, that we, at least, should not suffer these ancient monuments to be destroyed, whose history has been thus so astonishingly preserved. The English farmer may tear down the barrow which is unfortunate enough to be situated within his bounds. Neither he nor his neighbours know or can tell anything about its

ancient history; the removed earth will help to make his cattle fatter and improve his crops, the stones will be useful to pave his roads and build his fences, and the savant can enjoy the rest; but the Irish farmer and landlord should not do or suffer this.

The instinctive reverence of the peasantry has hitherto been a great preservative; but the spread of education has to a considerable extent impaired this kindly sentiment, and the progress of scientific farming, and the anxiety of the Royal Irish Academy to collect antiquarian trifles, have already led to the reckless destruction of too many. I think that no one who reads the first two volumes of this history would greatly care to bear a hand in the destruction of that tomb at Tara, in which long since his people laid the bones of Cuculain; and I think, too, that they would not like to destroy any other monument of the same age, when they know that the history of its occupant and its own name are preserved in the ancient literature, and that they may one day learn all that is to be known concerning it. I am sure that if the case were put fairly to the Irish landlords and country gentlemen, they would neither inflict nor permit this outrage upon the antiquities of their country. The Irish country gentleman prides himself on his love of trees, and entertains a very wholesome contempt for the mercantile boor who, on purchasing an old place, chops down the best timber

for the market. And yet a tree, though cut down, may be replaced. One elm tree is as good as another, and the thinned wood, by proper treatment, will be as dense as ever; but the ancient mound, once carted away, can never be replaced any more. When the study of the Irish literary records is revived, as it certainly will be revived, the old history of each of these raths and cromlechs will be brought again into the light, and one new interest of a beautiful and edifying nature attached to the landscape, and affecting wholly for good the minds of our people.

Irishmen are often taunted with the fact that their history is yet unwritten, but that the Irish, as a nation, have been careless of their past is refuted by the facts which I have mentioned. A people who alone in Europe preserved, not in dry chronicles alone, but illuminated and adorned with all that fancy could suggest in ballad, and tale, and rude epic, the history of the mound-raising period, are not justly liable to this taunt. Until very modern times, history was the one absorbing pursuit of the Irish secular intellect, the delight of the noble, and the solace of the vile.

At present, indeed, the apathy on this subject is, I believe, without parallel in the world. It would seem as if the Irish, extreme in all things, at one time thought of nothing but their history, and, at another, thought of everything but it. Unlike those who write

on other subjects, the author of a work on Irish history has to labour simultaneously at a two-fold task—he has to create the interest to which he intends to address himself.

The pre-Christian period of Irish history presents difficulties from which the corresponding period in the histories of other countries is free. The surrounding nations escape the difficulty by having nothing to record. The Irish historian is immersed in perplexity on account of the mass of material ready to his hand. The English have lost utterly all record of those centuries before which the Irish historian stands with dismay and hesitation, not through deficiency of materials, but through their excess. Had nought but the chronicles been preserved the task would have been simple. We would then have had merely to determine approximately the date of the introduction of letters, and allowing a margin on account of the bardic system and the commission of family and national history to the keeping of rhymed and alliterated verse, fix upon some reasonable point, and set down in order, the old successions of kings and the battles and other remarkable events. But in Irish history there remains, demanding treatment, that other immense mass of literature of an imaginative nature, illuminating with anecdote and tale the events and personages mentioned simply and without comment by the chronicler. It is this poetic

literature which constitutes the stumbling-block, as it constitutes also the glory, of early Irish history, for it cannot be rejected and it cannot be retained. It cannot be rejected, because it contains historical matter which is consonant with and illuminates the dry lists of the chronologist, and it cannot be retained, for popular poetry is not history; and the task of distinguishing in such literature the fact from the fiction—where there is certainly fact and certainly fiction—is one of the most difficult to which the intellect can apply itself. That this difficulty has not been hitherto surmounted by Irish writers is no just reproach. For the last century, intellects of the highest attainments, trained and educated to the last degree, have been vainly endeavouring to solve a similar question in the far less copious and less varied heroic literature of Greece. Yet the labours of Wolfe, Grote, Mahaffy, Geddes, and Gladstone, have not been sufficient to set at rest the small question, whether it was one man or two or many who composed the Iliad and Odyssey, while the reality of the achievements of Achilles and even his existence might be denied or asserted by a scholar without general reproach. When this is the case with regard to the great heroes of the Iliad, I fancy it will be some time before the same problem will have been solved for the minor characters, and as it affects Thersites, or that eminent artist who dwelt at home in Hyla, being

by far the most excellent of leather cutters. When, therefore, Greek still meets Greek in an interminable and apparently bloodless contest over the disputed body of the Iliad, and still no end appears, surely it would be madness for any one to sit down and gaily distinguish true from false in the immense and complex mass of the Irish bardic literature, having in his ears this century-lasting struggle over a single Greek poem and a single small phase of the pre-historic life of Hellas.

In the Irish heroic literature, the presence or absence of the marvellous supplies *no test whatsoever* as to the general truth or falsehood of the tale in which they appear. The marvellous is supplied with greater abundance in the account of the battle of Clontarf, and the wars of the O'Briens with the Normans, than in the tale in which is described the foundation of Emain Macha by Kimbay. Exact-thinking, scientific France has not hesitated to paint the battles of Louis XIV. with similar hues; and England, though by no means fertile in angelic interpositions, delights to adorn the barren tracts of her more popular histories with apocryphal anecdotes.

How then should this heroic literature of Ireland be treated in connection with the history of the country? The true method would certainly be to print it exactly as it is without excision or condensation. Immense it

is, and immense it must remain. No men living, and no men to live, will ever so exhaust the meaning of any single tale as to render its publication unnecessary for the study of others. The order adopted should be that which the bards themselves determined, any other would be premature, and I think no other will ever take its place. At the commencement should stand the passage from the Book of Invasions, describing the occupation of the isle by Queen Keasair and her companions, and along with it every discoverable tale or poem dealing with this event and those characters. After that, all that remains of the cycle of which Partholān was the protagonist. Thirdly, all that relates to Nemeth and his sons, their wars with curt Kical the bow-legged, and all that relates to the Fōmoroh of the Nemedian epoch, then first moving dimly in the forefront of our history. After that, the great Fir-bolgic cycle, a cycle janus-faced, looking on one side to the mythological period and the wars of the gods, and on the other, to the heroic, and more particularly to the Ultonian cycle. In the next place, the immense mass of bardic literature which treats of the Irish gods who, having conquered the Fir-bolgs, like the Greek gods of the age of gold dwelt visibly in the island until the coming of the Clan Milith, out of Spain. In the sixth, the Milesian invasion, and every accessible statement concerning the sons and kindred of Milesius. In the

seventh, the disconnected tales dealing with those local heroes whose history is not connected with the great cycles, but who in the *fasti* fill the spaces between the divine period and the heroic. In the eighth, the heroic cycles, the Ultonian, the Temairian, and the Fenian, and after these the historic tales that, without forming cycles, accompany the course of history down to the extinction of Irish independence, and the transference to aliens of all the great sources of authority in the island.

This great work when completed will be of that kind of which no other European nation can supply an example. Every public library in the world will find it necessary to procure a copy. The chronicles will then cease to be so closely and exclusively studied. Every history of ancient Ireland will consist of more or less intelligent comments upon and theories formed in connection with this great series—theories which, in general, will only be formed in order to be destroyed. What the present age demands upon the subject of antique Irish history—an exact and scientific treatment of the facts supplied by our native authorities—will be demanded for ever. It will never be supplied. The history of Ireland will be contained in this huge publication. In it the poet will find endless themes of song, the philosopher strange workings of the human mind, the archæologist a mass of information, marvellous in

amount and quality, with regard to primitive ideas and habits of life, and the rationalist materials for framing a scientific history of Ireland, which will be acceptable in proportion to the readableness of his style, and the mode in which his views may harmonize with the prevailing humour and complexion of his contemporaries.

Such a work it is evident could not be effected by a single individual. It must be a public and national undertaking, carried out under the supervision of the Royal Irish Academy, at the expense of the country.

The publication of the Irish bardic remains in the way that I have mentioned, is the only true and valuable method of presenting the history of Ireland to the notice of the world. The mode which I have myself adopted, that other being out of the question, is open to many obvious objections; but in the existing state of the Irish mind on the subject, no other is possible to an individual writer. I desire to make this heroic period once again a portion of the imagination of the country, and its chief characters as familiar in the minds of our people as they once were. As mere history, and treated in the method in which history is generally written at the present day, a work dealing with the early Irish kings and heroes would certainly not secure an audience. Those who demand such a treatment forget that there is not in the country an interest on the subject to which to appeal. A work

treating of early Irish kings, in the same way in which the historians of neighbouring countries treat of their own early kings, would be, to the Irish public generally, unreadable. It might enjoy the reputation of being well written, and as such receive an honourable place in half-a-dozen public libraries, but it would be otherwise left severely alone. It would never make its way through that frozen zone which, on this subject, surrounds the Irish mind.

On the other hand, Irishmen are as ready as others to feel an interest in a human character, having themselves the ordinary instincts, passions, and curiosities of human nature. If I can awake an interest in the career of even a single ancient Irish king, I shall establish a train of thoughts, which will advance easily from thence to the state of society in which he lived, and the kings and heroes who surrounded, preceded, or followed him. Attention and interest once fully aroused, concerning even one feature of this landscape of ancient history, could be easily widened and extended in its scope.

Now, if nothing remained of early Irish history save the dry *fasti* of the chronicles and the Brehon laws, this would, I think, be a perfectly legitimate object of ambition, and would be consonant with my ideal of what the perfect flower of historical literature should be, to illuminate a tale embodying the former by hues derived from the Senchus Mōr.

But in Irish literature there has been preserved, along with the *fasti* and the laws, this immense mass of ancient ballad, tale, and epic, whose origin is lost in the mists of extreme antiquity, and in which have been preserved the characters, relationships, adventures, and achievements of the vast majority of the personages whose names, in a gaunt nakedness, fill the books of the chroniclers. Around each of the greater heroes there groups itself a mass of bardic literature, varying in tone and statement, but preserving a substantial unity as to the general character and the more important achievements of the hero, and also, a fact upon which their general historical accuracy may be based with confidence, exhibiting a knowledge of that same prior and subsequent history recorded in the *fasti*. The literature which groups itself around a hero exhibits not only an unity with itself, but an acquaintance with the general course of the history of the country, and with preceding and succeeding kings.

The students of Irish literature do not require to be told this; for those who are not, I would give a single instance as an illustration.

In the battle of Gabra, fought in the third century, and in which Oscar, perhaps the greatest of all the Irish heroes heading the Fianna Eireen, contended against Cairbry of the Liffey, King of Ireland, and his troops, Cairbry on his side announces to his warriors

that he would rather perish in this battle than suffer one of the Fianna to survive; but while he spoke—

> " Barrān suddenly exclaimed—
> ' Remember Mah Mucreema, remember Art.
>
> ' Our ancestors fell there
> By force of the treachery of the Fians;
> Remember the hard tributes,
> Remember the extraordinary pride.' "

Here the poet, singing only of the events of the battle of Gabra, shows that he was well-acquainted with all the relations subsisting for a long time between the Fians and the Royal family. The battle of Mucreema was fought by Cairbry's grandfather, Art, against Lewy Mac Conn and the Fianna Eireen.

Again, in the tale of the battle of Moy Leana, in which Conn of the Hundred Battles, the father of this same Art, is the principal character, the author of the tale mentions many times circumstances relating to his father, Fēlimy Rectmar, and his grandfather, Tuhall Tectmar. Such is the whole of the Irish literature, not vague, nebulous, and shifting, but following the course of the *fasti*, and regulated and determined by them. This argument has been used by Mr. Gladstone with great confidence, in order to show the substantial historical truthfulness of the Iliad, and that it is in fact a portion of a continuous historic sequence.

Now this being admitted, that the course of Irish

history, as laid down by the chroniclers, was familiar to the authors of the tales and heroic ballads, one of two things must be admitted, either that the events and kings did succeed one another in the order mentioned by the chroniclers, or that what the chroniclers laid down was then taken as the theme of song by the bards, and illuminated and adorned according to their wont.

The second of these suppositions is one which I think few will adopt. Can we believe it possible that the bards, who actually supported themselves by the amount of pleasure which they gave their audiences, would have forsaken those subjects which were already popular, and those kings and heroes whose splendour and achievements must have affected, profoundly, the popular imagination, in order to invent stories to illuminate fabricated names. The thing is quite impossible. A practice which we can trace to the edge of that period whose historical character may be proved to demonstration, we may conclude to have extended on into the period immediately preceding that. When bards illuminated with stories and marvellous circumstances the battle of Clontarf and the battle of Moyrath, we may believe their predecessors to have done the same for the earlier centuries. The absence of an imaginative literature other than historical shows also that the literature must have followed, regularly, the course of the history, and was not an archæological attempt to create an

interest in names and events which were found in the chronicles. It is, therefore, a reasonable conclusion that the bardic literature, where it reveals a clear sequence in the order of events, and where there is no antecedent improbability, supplies a trustworthy guide to the general course of our history.

So far as the clear light of history reaches, so far may these tales be proved to be historical. It is, therefore, reasonable to suppose that the same consonance between them and the actual course of events which subsisted during the period which lies in clear light, marked also that other preceding period of which the light is no longer dry.

The earliest manuscript of these tales is the Leabhar* na Huidhré, a work of the eleventh century, so that we may feel sure that we have them in a condition unimpaired by the revival of learning, or any archæological restoration or improvement. Now, of some of these there have been preserved copies in other later MSS., which differ very little from the copies preserved in the Leabhar na Huidhré, from which we may conclude that these tales had arrived at a fixed state, and a point at which it was considered wrong to interfere with the text.

The feast of Bricrind is one of the tales preserved in this manuscript. The author of the tale in its present

* Leabar na Heera.

form, whenever he lived, composed it, having before him original books which he collated, using his judgment at times upon the materials to his hand. At one stage he observes that the books are at variance on a certain point, namely, that at which Cuculain, Conal the Victorious, and Læry Buada go to the lake of Uath in order to be judged by him. Some of the books, according to the author, stated that on this occasion the two latter behaved unfairly, but he agreed with those books which did not state this.

We have, therefore, a tale penned in the eleventh century, composed at some time prior to this, and itself collected, not from oral tradition, but from books. These considerations would, therefore, render it extremely probable that the tales of the Ultonian period, with which the Leabhar na Huidhré is principally concerned, were committed to writing at a very early period.

To strengthen still further the general historic credibility of these tales, and to show how close to the events and heroes described must have been the bards who originally composed them, I would urge the following considerations.

With the advent of Christianity the mound-raising period passed away. The Irish heroic tales have their source in, and draw their interest from, the mounds and those laid in them. It would, therefore, be ex-

tremely improbable that the bards of the Christian period, when the days of rath and cairn had departed, would modify, to any considerable extent, the literature produced in conditions of society which had passed away.

Again, with the advent of Christianity, and the hold which the new faith took upon the finest and boldest minds in the country, it is plain that the golden age of bardic composition ended. The loss to the bards was direct, by the withdrawal of so much intellect from their ranks, and indirect, by the general substitution of other ideas for those whose ministers they themselves were. It is, therefore, probable that the age of production and creation, with regard to the ethnic history, ceased about the fifth and sixth centuries, and that, about that time, men began to gather up into a collected form the floating literature connected with the pagan period. The general current of mediæval opinion attributes the collection of tales and ballads now known as the Tân-Bo-Cooalney to St. Ciaran, the great founder of the monastery of Clonmacnoise.

But if this be the case, we are enabled to take another step in the history of this most valuable literature. The tales of the Leabhar na Huidhré are in prose, but prose whose source and original is poetry. The author, from time to time, as if quoting an authority, breaks out with verse; and I think there is

no Irish tale in existence without these rudimentary traces of a prior metrical cycle. The style and language are quite different, and indicate two distinct epochs. The prose tale is founded upon a metrical original, and composed in the meretricious style then in fashion, while the old metrical excerpts are pure and simple. This is sufficient, in a country like Ireland in those primitive times, to necessitate a considerable step into the past, if we desire to get at the originals upon which the prose tales were founded.

For in ancient Ireland the conservatism of the people was very great. It is the case in all primitive societies. Individual, initiative, personal enterprise are content to work within a very small sphere. In agriculture, laws, customs, and modes of literary composition, primitive and simple societies are very adverse to change.

When we see how closely the Christian compilers followed the early authorities, we can well believe that in the ethnic times no mind would have been sufficiently daring or sacrilegious to alter or pervert those epics which were in their eyes at the same time true and sacred.

In the perusal of the Irish literature, we see that the strength of this conservative instinct has been of the greatest service in the preservation of the early monuments in their purity. So much is this the case, that

in many tales the most flagrant contradictions appear, the author or scribe being unwilling to depart at all from that which he found handed down. For instance, in the "Great Breach of Murthemney," we find Læg at one moment killed, and in the next riding black Shanglan off the field. From this conservatism and careful following of authority, and the *littera scripta*, or word once spoken, I conclude that the distance in time between the prose tale and the metrical originals was very great, and, unless under such exceptional circumstances as the revolution caused by the introduction of Christianity, could not have been brought about within hundreds of years. Moreover, this same conservatism would have caused the tales concerning heroes to grow very slowly once they were actually formed. All the noteworthy events of the hero's life and his characteristics must have formed the original of the tales concerning him, which would have been composed during his life, or not long after his death.

I have not met a single tale, whether in verse or prose, in which it is not clearly seen that the author was not following authorities before him. Such traces of invention or decoration as may be met with are not suffered to interfere with the conduct of the tale and the statement of facts. They fill empty niches and adorn vacant places. For instance, if a king is represented as crossing the sea, we find that the causes

leading to this, the place whence he set out, his companions, &c., are derived from the authorities, but the bard, at the same time, permits himself to give what seems to him to be an eloquent or beautiful description of the sea, and the appearance presented by the many-oared galleys. And yet the last transcription or recension of the majority of the tales was effected in Christian times, and in an age characterised by considerable classical attainments—a time when the imagination might have been expected to shake itself loose from old restraints, and freely invent. *A fortiori*, the more ancient bards, those of the ruder ethnic times, would have clung still closer to authority, deriving all their imaginative representations from preceding minstrels. There was no conscious invention at any time. Each cycle and tale grew from historic roots, and was developed from actual fact. So much may indeed be said for the more ancient tales, but the Ultonian cycle deals with events well within the historic period.

The era of Concobar Mac Nessa and the Red Branch knights of Ulster was long subsequent to the floruerunt of the Irish gods and their Titan-like opponents Of this latter period, the names alone can be fairly held to be historic. What swells out the Irish chronicles to such portentous dimensions is the history of the gods and giants rationalised by mediæval historians. Unable to ignore or excide what filled so much of the imagination

of the country, and unable, as Christians, to believe in the divinity of the Tuátha Dē Danān and their predecessors, they rationalised all the pre-Milesian record. But the disappearance of the gods does not yet bring us within the penumbra of history. After the death of the sons of Milesius we find a long roll of kings. These were all topical heroes, founders of nations, and believed, by the tribes and tribal confederacies which they founded, to have been in their day the chief kings of Ireland. The point fixed upon by the accurate and sceptical Tiherna as the starting-point of trustworthy Irish history, was one long subsequent to the floruerunt of the gods; and the age of Concobar Mac Nessa and his knights was more than two centuries later than that of Kimbay and the foundation of Emain Macha. The floruit of Cuculain, therefore, falls completely within the historical penumbra, and the more carefully the enormous, and in the main mutually consistent and self-supporting, historical remains dealing with this period are studied, the more will this be believed. The minuteness, accuracy, extent, and verisimilitude of the literature, chronicles, pedigrees, &c., relating to this period, will cause the student to wonder more and more as he examines and collates, seeing the marvellous self-consistency and consentaneity of such a mass of varied recorded matter. The age, indeed, breathes sublimity, and abounds with the marvellous, the romantic, and the

grotesque. But as I have already stated, the presence or absence of these qualities has no crucial significance. Love and reverence and the poetic imagination always effect such changes in the object of their passion. They are the essential condition of the transference of the real into the world of art. Æval, of Carriglea, the fairy queen of Munster, is one of the most important characters in the history of the battle of Clontarf, the character of which, and of the events that preceded and followed its occurrence, and the chieftains and warriors who fought on one side and the other, are identical, whether described by the bard singing, or by the monkish chronicler jotting down in plain prose the fasti for the year. The reader of these volumes can make such deductions as he pleases, on this account, from the bardic history of the Red Branch, and clip the wings of the tale, so that it may with him travel pedestrian. I know there are others, like myself, who will not hesitate for once to let the fancy roam and luxuriate in the larger spaces and freer airs of ancient song, nor fear that their sanity will be imperilled by the shouting of semi-divine heroes, and the sight of Cuculain entering battles with the Tuátha Dē Danān around him.

I hope on some future occasion to examine more minutely the character and place in literature of the Irish bardic remains, and put forward here these

general considerations, from which the reader may presume that the Ultonian cycle, dealing as it does with Cuculain and his contemporaries, is in the main true to the facts of the time, and that his history, and that of the other heroes who figure in these volumes, is, on the whole, and omitting the marvellous, sufficiently reliable. I would ask the reader, who may be inclined to think that the principal character is too chivalrous and refined for the age, to peruse for himself the tale named the "Great Breach of Murthemney." He will there, and in many other tales and poems besides, see that the noble and pathetic interest which attaches to his character is substantially the same as I have represented in these volumes. But unless the student has read the whole of the Ultonian cycle, he should be cautious in condemning a departure in my work from any particular version of an event which he may have himself met. Of many minor events there are more than one version, and many scenes and assertions which he may think of importance would yet, by being related, cause inconsistency and contradiction. Of the nature of the work in which all should be introduced I have already given my opinion.

For the rest, I have related one or two great events in the life of Cuculain in such a way as to give a description as clear and correct as possible of his own character and history as related by the bards, of those celebrated

men and women who were his contemporaries and of his relations with them, of the gods and supernatural powers in whom the people then believed, and of the state of civilisation which then prevailed. If I have done my task well, the reader will have been supplied, without any intensity of application on his part—a condition of the public mind upon which no historian of this country should count—with some knowledge of ancient Irish history, and with an interest in the subject which may lead him to peruse for himself that ancient literature, and to read works of a more strictly scientific nature upon the subject than those which I have yet written. But until such an interest is aroused, it is useless to swell the mass of valuable critical matter, which everyone at present is very well content to leave unread.

In the first volume, however, I have committed this error, that I did not permit it to be seen with sufficient clearness that the characters and chief events of the tale are absolutely historic; and that much of the colouring, inasmuch as its source must have been the centuries immediately succeeding the floruerunt of those characters, is also reliable as history, while the remainder is true to the times and the state of society which then obtained. The story seems to progress too much in the air, too little in time and space, and seems to be more of the nature of legend and romance than of

actual historic fact seen through an imaginative medium. Such is the history of Concobar Mac Nessa and his knights—historic fact seen through the eyes of a loving wonder.

Indeed, I must confess that the blaze of bardic light which illuminates those centuries at first so dazzled the eye and disturbed the judgment, that I saw only the literature, only the epic and dramatic interest, and did not see as I should the distinctly historical character of the age around which that literature revolves, wrongly deeming that a literature so noble, and dealing with events so remote, must have originated mainly or altogether in the imagination. All the borders of the epic representation at which, in the first volume, I have aimed, seem to melt, and wander away vaguely on every side into space and time. I have now taken care to remedy that defect, supplying to the unset picture the clear historical frame to which it is entitled. I will also request the reader, when the two volumes may diverge in tone or statement, to attach greater importance to the second, as the result of wider and more careful reading and more matured reflection.

A great English poet, himself a severe student, pronounced the early history of his own country to be a mere scuffling of kites and crows, as indeed are all wars which lack the sacred bard, and the sacred bard is absent where the kites and crows pick out his eyes.

That the Irish kings and heroes should succeed one another, surrounded by a blaze of bardic light, in which both themselves and all those who were contemporaneous with them are seen clearly and distinctly, was natural in a country where in each little realm or sub-kingdom the ard-ollav was equal in dignity to the king, which is proved by the equivalence of their erics. The dawn of English history is in the seventh century—a late dawn, dark and sombre, without a ray of cheerful sunshine; that of Ireland dates reliably from a point before the commencement of the Christian era—luminous with that light which never was on sea or land—thronged with heroic forms of men and women—terrible with the presence of the supernatural and its over-arching power.

Educated Irishmen are ignorant of, and indifferent to, their history; yet from the hold of that history they cannot shake themselves free. It still haunts the imagination, like Mordecai at Haman's gate, a cause of continual annoyance and vexation. An Irishman can no more release himself from his history than he can absolve himself from social and domestic duties. He may outrage it, but he cannot placidly ignore. Hence the uneasy, impatient feeling with which the subject is generally regarded.

I think that I do not exaggerate when I say that the majority of educated Irishmen would feel grateful to

the man who informed them that the history of their country was valueless and unworthy of study, that the pre-Christian history was a myth, the post-Christian mere annals, the mediæval a scuffling of kites and crows, and the modern alone deserving of some slight consideration. That writer will be in Ireland most praised who sets latest the commencement of our history. Without study he will be pronounced sober and rational before the critic opens the book. So anxious is the Irish mind to see that effaced which it is conscious of having neglected.

There are two compositions which affect an interest comparable to that which Ireland claims for her bardic literature. One is the Ossian of MacPherson, the other the Nibelungen Lied.

If we are to suppose Macpherson faithfully to have written down, printed, and published the floating disconnected poems which he found lingering in the Scotch highlands, how small, comparatively, would be their value as indications of antique thought and feeling, reduced then for the first time to writing, sixteen hundred years after the time of Ossian and his heroes, in a country not the home of those heroes, and destitute of the regular bardic organisation. The Ossianic tales and poems still told and sung by the Irish peasantry at the present day in the country of Ossian and Oscar, would be, if collected even now, quite as valuable, if not

more so. Truer to the antique these latter are, for in them the cycles are not blended. The Red Branch heroes are not confused with Ossian's Fianna.

But MacPherson's Ossian is not a translation. In the publications of the Irish Ossianic poetry we see what that poetry really was—rude, homely, plain-spoken, leagues removed from the nebulous sublimity of MacPherson.

With regard to the other, the Germans, who naturally desire to refer its composition to as remote a date as possible, and who arguing from no scientific data, but only style, ascribe the authorship of the Nibelungen to a poet living in the latter part of the twelfth century. Be it remembered, that the poem does not purport to be a collection of the scattered fragments of a cycle, but an original composition, then actually imagined and written. It does not even purport to deal with the ethnic times. *Its heroes are Christian heroes. They attend Mass.* The poem is not true, even to the leading features of the late period of history in which it is placed, if it have any habitat in the world of history at all. Attila, who died A.D. 450, and Theodoric, who did not die until the succeeding century, meet as coevals.

Turn we now from the sole boast of Germany to one out of a hundred in the Irish bardic literature. The Tân-bo-Cooalney was transcribed into the Leabhar na Huidhré in the eleventh century—a manuscript whose

date has been established by the consentaneity of Irish, French, and German scholarship. Mark, it was transcribed, not composed. The scribe records the fact :—

"Ego qui scripsi hanc historiam aut vero fabulam, quibusdam fidem in hac historiâ aut fabulâ non commodo."

The Tàn-bo-Cooalney was therefore *transcribed* by an ancient penman to the parchment of a still existing manuscript, in the century before that in which the German epic is presumed, from style only, and in the opinion of Germans, to have been *composed*.

The same scribe adds this comment with regard to its contents :—

"Quædam autem poetica figmenta, quædam ad delectationem stultorum."

Such scorn could not have been felt by one living in an age of bardic production. That independence and originality of thought, which caused Milton to despise the poets of the Restoration, are impossible in the simple stages of civilisation. The scribe who appended this very interesting comment to the subject of his own handiwork must have been removed by centuries from the date of its compilation. That the tale was, in his time, an ancient one, is therefore rendered extremely probable, the scribe himself indicating how completely out of sympathy he is with this form of literature, its antiquity and peculiar archæological interest being, doubtless, the cause of the transcription.

Again, a close study of its contents, as of the contents of all the Irish historic tales, proves that in its present form, whenever that form was superadded, it is but a representation in prose of a pre-existing metrical original. Under this head I have already made some remarks, which, I shall request the reader to re-peruse.*

Once more, it deals with a particular event in Irish history, and with distinct and definite kings, heroes, and bards, who flourished in the epoch of which it treats. In the synchronisms of Tiherna, in the metrical chronology of Flann, in all the various historical compositions produced in various parts of the country, the main features and leading characters of the Tân-bo-Cooalney suffer no material change, while the minor divergencies show that the chronology of the annals and annalistic poems were not drawn from the tale, but owe their origin to other sources. Moreover, this epic is but a portion of the great Ultonian or Red Branch cycle, all the parts of which pre-suppose and support one another; and that cycle is itself a portion of the history of Ireland, and pre-supposes other preceding and succeeding cyles, preceding and succeeding kings. The event of which this epic treats occurred at the time of the Incarnation, and its characters are the leading Irish kings and warriors of that date. Such is the Tân-bo-Cooalney.

Pages 23 to 27.

This being so, how have the English literary classes recognised, or how treated, our claim to the possession of an antique literature of peculiar historical interest, and by reason of that antiquity, a matter of concern to all Aryan nations? The conquest has not more constituted the English Parliament guardian and trustee of Ireland, for purposes of legislation and government, than it has vested the welfare and fame of our literature and antiquities in the hands of English scholarship. London is the headquarters of the intellectualism and of the literary and historical culture of the Empire. It is the sole dispenser of fame. It alone influences the mind of the country and guides thought and sentiment. It can make and mar reputations. What it scorns or ignores, the world, too, ignores and scorns. How then has the native literature of Ireland been treated by the representatives of English scholarship and literary culture? Mr. Carlyle is the first man of letters of the day, his the highest name as a critic upon, and historian of, the past life of Europe. Let us hear him upon this subject, admittedly of European importance.

Miscellaneous Essays, Vol. III., page 136. "Not only as the oldest Tradition of Modern Europe does it —the Nibelungen—possess a high antiquarian interest, but farther, and even in the shape we now see it under, unless the epics of the son of Fingal had some sort of authenticity, it is our *oldest* poem also."

Poor Ireland, with her hundred ancient epics, standing at the door of the temple of fame, or, indeed, quite behind the vestibule out of the way! To see the Swabian enter in, crowned, to a flourish of somewhat barbarous music, was indeed bad enough, but Mr. MacPherson!

They manage these things rather better in France, *vide passim* "La Révue Celtique."

Of the literary value of the bardic literature I fear to write at all, lest I should not know how to make an end. Rude indeed it is, but great. Like the central chamber of that huge tumulus* on the Boyne, overarched with massive unhewn rocks, its very ruggedness strikes an awe which the orderly arrangement of smaller and more reasonable thoughts, cut smooth by instruments inherited from classic times, fails so often to inspire. The labour of the Attic chisel may be seen since its invention in every other literary workshop of Europe, and seen in every other laboratory of thought the transmitted divine fire of the Hebrew. The bardic literature of Erin stands alone, as distinctively and genuinely Irish as the race itself, or the natural aspects of the island. Rude indeed it is, but like the hills which its authors tenanted with gods, holding dells† of the most perfect beauty, springs of the most touching

* New Grange anciently Cnobgha, and now also Knowth.

† Those sacred hills will generally be found to have this character.

pathos. On page 33, Vol. I., will be seen a poem* by Fionn upon the spring-time, made, as the old unknown historian says, to prove his poetic powers—a poem whose antique language relegates it to a period long prior to the tales of the Leabhar na Huidhré, one which, if we were to meet side by side with the "Ode to Night," by Alcman, in the Greek anthology, we would not be surprised; or those lines on page 203, Vol. I., the song of Cuculain, forsaken by his people, watching the frontier of his country—

> "Alone in defence of the Ultonians,
> Solitary keeping ward over the province"—

or the death† of Oscar, on pages 34 and 35, Vol. I., an excerpt condensed from the Battle of Gabra. Innumerable such tender and thrilling passages.

To all great nations their history presents itself under the aspect of poetry; a drama exciting pity and terror; an epic with unbroken continuity, and a wide range of thought, when the intellect is satisfied with coherence and unity, and the imagination by extent and diversity. Such is the bardic history of Ireland, but with this literary defect. A perfect epic is only possible when the critical spirit begins to be in the ascendant, for with the critical spirit comes that distrust and apathy towards

* Publications of Ossianic Society, page 303, Vol. IV.
† Publications of Ossianic Society, Vol. I.

the spontaneous literature of early times, which permit some great poet so to shape and alter the old materials as to construct a harmonious and internally consistent tale, observing throughout a sense of proportion and a due relation of the parts. Such a clipping and alteration of the authorities would have seemed sacrilege to earlier bards. In mediæval Ireland there was, indeed, a subtle spirit of criticism; but under its influence, being as it was of scholastic origin, no great singing men appeared, re-fashioning the old rude epics; and yet, the very shortcomings of the Irish tales, from a literary point of view, increase their importance from a historical. Of poetry, as distinguised from metrical composition, these ancient bards knew little. The bardic literature, profoundly poetic though it be, in the eyes of our ancestors was history, and never was anything else. As history it was originally composed, and as history bound in the chains of metre, that it might not be lost or dissipated passing through the minds of men, and as history it was translated into prose and committed to parchment. Accordingly, no tale is without its defects as poetry, possessing therefore necessarily, a corresponding value as history. But that there was in the country, in very early times, a high and rare poetic culture of the lyric kind, native in its character, ethnic in origin, unaffected by scholastic culture which, as we know, took a different direction; that one exquisite poem, in which

the father of Ossian praises the beauty of the spring-time in anapæstic* verse, would, even though it stood alone, both by the fact of its composition and the fact of its preservation, fully prove.

Much and careful study, indeed, it requires, if we would compel these ancient epics to yield up their greatness or their beauty, or even their logical coherence and imaginative unity—broken, scattered portions as they all are of that one enormous epic, the bardic history of Ireland. At the best we read without the key. The magic of the names is gone, or can only be partially recovered by the most tender and sympathetic study. Indeed, without reading all or many, we will not understand the superficial meaning of even one. For instance, in one of the many histories of Cuculain's many battles, we read this—

"It was said that Lu Mac Æthleen was assisting him."

This at first seems meaningless, the bard seeing no necessity for throwing further light on the subject; but, as we wander through the bardic literature, gradually

* Cettemain | cain ree ! | ro sair | an cuct |

"He, Fionn MacCool, learned the three compositions which distinguish the poets, the TEINM LAEGHA, the IMUS OF OSNA, and the DICEDUE DICCENAIB, and it was then Fionn composed this poem to prove his poetry."

In which of these three forms of metre the Ode to the spring-time is written I know not. Its form throughout is distinctly anapæstic.—S. O'G.

the conception of this Lu grows upon the mind—the destroyer of the sons of Turānn—the implacably filial—the expulsor of the Fōmoroh—the source of all the sciences—the god of the Tuátha Dē Danān—the protector and guardian of Cuculain—Lu Lamfáda, son of Cian, son of Diancéct, son of Esric, son of Dēla, son of Ned the war-god, whose tomb or temple, Aula Neid, may still be seen beside the Foyle. This enormous and seemingly chaotic mass of literature is found at all times to possess an inner harmony, a consistency and logical unity, to be apprehended only by careful study.

So read, the sublimity strikes through the rude representation. Astonished at himself, the student, who at first thinks that he has chanced upon a crowd of barbarians, ere long finds himself in the august presence of demi-gods and heroes.

A noble moral tone pervades the whole. Courage, affection, and truth are native to all who live in this world. Under the dramatic image of Ossian wrangling with the Talkend,* the bards, themselves vainly fighting against the Christian life, a hundred times repeat through the lips of Ossian like a refrain—

> "We, the Fianna of Erin, never uttered falsehood,
> Lying was never attributed to us;
> By courage and the strength of our hands
> We used to come out of every difficulty."

* St. Patrick, on account of the tonsured crown.

Again: Fergus, the bard, inciting Oscar to his last battle —in that poem called the Rosc Catha of Oscar:—

> "Place thy hand on thy gentle forehead—
> Oscar, who never lied."*

And again, elsewhere in the Ossianic poetry:—

> "Oscar, who never wronged bard or woman."

Strange to say, too, they inculcated chastity (see p. 257; vol. i.), an allusion taken from the "youthful adventures of Cuculain," Leabhar na Huidhré.

The following ancient rann contains the four qualifications of a bard:—

> "Purity of hand, bright, without wounding,
> Purity of mouth, without poisonous satire,
> Purity of learning, without reproach,
> Purity, as a husband, in wedlock."

Moreover, through all this literature sounds a high clear note of chivalry, in this contrasting favourably with the Iliad, where no man foregoes an advantage. Cuculain having slain the sons of Neara, "thought it unworthy of him to take possession of their chariot and horses."† Göll Mac Morna, in the Fenian or Ossianic cycle, declares to Conn Cedcathah‡ that from his youth up he never attacked an enemy by night or under any dis-

* Publications of Ossianic Society, p. 159; vol. i.

† P. 155; vol. i.

‡ Conn of the hundred battles.

advantage, and many times we read of heroes preferring to die rather than outrage their geisa.*

A noble literature indeed it is, having too this strange interest, that though mainly characterised by a great plainness and simplicity of thought, and, in the earlier stages, of expression, we feel, oftentimes, a sudden weirdness, a strange glamour shoots across the poem when the tale seems to open for a moment into mysterious depths, druidic secrets veiled by time, unsunned caves of thought, indicating a still deeper range of feeling, a still lower and wider reach of imagination. A youth came once to the Fianna Eireen encamped at Locha Lein,† leading a hound dazzling white, like snow. It was the same, the bard simply states, that was once a yew tree, flourishing fifty summers in the woods of Ioroway. Elsewhere, he is said to have been more terrible than the sun upon his flaming wheels. What meant this yew tree and the hound? Stray allusions I have met, but no history. The spirit of Cœlté, visiting one far removed in time from the great captain of the Fianna, with a different name and different history, cries:—

"I was with thee, with Finn"—

giving no explanation.

To MacPherson, however, I will do this justice, that

* Certain vows taken with their arms on being knighted.

† The Lakes of Killarney.

he had the merit to perceive, even in the debased and floating ballads of the highlands, traces of some past greatness and sublimity of thought, and to understand, he, for the first time, how much more they meant than what met the ear. But he saw, too, that the historical origin of the ballads, and the position in time and place of the heroes whom they praised, had been lost in that colony removed since the time of St. Columba from its old connection with the mother country. Thus released from the curb of history, he gave free rein to the imagination, and in the conventional literary language of sublimity, gave full expression to the feelings that arose within him, as to him, pondering over those ballads, their gigantesque element developed into a greatness and solemnity, and their vagueness and indeterminateness into that misty immensity and weird obscurity which, as constituent factors in a poem, not as back-ground, form one of the elements of the false sublime. Either not seeing the literary necessity of definiteness, or having no such abundant and ordered literature as we possess, upon which to draw for details, and being too conscientious to invent facts, however he might invent language, he published his epics of Ossian—false indeed to the original, but true to himself, and to the feelings excited by meditation upon them. This done, he had not sufficient courage to publish also the rude, homely, and often vulgar ballads—a step which, in that hard

critical age, would have been to expose himself and his country to swift contempt. The thought of the great lexicographer riding rough-shod over the poor mountain songs which he loved, and the fame which he had already acquired, deterred and dissuaded him, if he had ever any such intention, until the opportunity was past.

MacPherson feared English public opinion, and fearing lied. He declared that to be a translation which was original work, thus relegating himself for ever to a dubious renown, and depriving his country of the honest fame of having preserved through centuries, by mere oral transmission, a portion, at least, of the antique Irish literature. To the magnanimity of his own heroes he could not attain :—

> "Oscar, who feared not armies—
> Oscar, who never lied."

Of some such error as MacPherson's I have myself, with less excuse, been guilty, in chapters xi. and xii., Vol. I., where I attempt to give some conception of the character of the Ossianic cycle. The age and the heroes around whom that cycle revolves have, in the history of Ireland, a definite position in time ; their battles, characters, several achievements, relationships, and pedigrees ; their Dûns, and trysting-places, and tombs ; their wives, musicians, and bards ; their tributes, and sufferings, and triumphs ; their internecine and other

wars—are all fully and clearly described in the Ossianic cycle. They still remain demanding adequate treatment, when we arrive at the age of Conn,* Art, and Cormac, kings of Tara in the second and third centuries of the Christian era. All have been forgotten for the sake of a vague representation of the more sublime aspects of the cycle, and the meretricious seductions of a form of composition easy to write and easy to read, and to which the unwary or unwise often award praise to which it has no claim.

On the other hand, chapter xi. purports only to be a representation of the feelings excited by this literature, and for every assertion there is authority in the cycle. Chapter xii., however, is a translation from the original. Every idea which it contains, except one, has been taken from different parts of the Ossianic poems, and all together express the graver attitude of the mind of Ossian towards the new faith. That idea, occurring in a separate paragraph in the middle of the page, though prevalent as a sentiment throughout all the conversations of Ossian with St. Patrick, has been, as it stands, taken from a meditation on life by St. Columbanus, one of the early Irish Saints—a meditation which, for subtle thought, for musical resigned sadness, tender brooding reflection, and exquisite Latin, is one of the masterpieces of mediæval composition.

* See page 20.

To the casual reader of the bardic literature the preservation of an ordered historical sequence, amidst that riotous wealth of imaginative energy, may appear an impossibility. Can we believe that forestine luxuriance not to have overgrown all highways, that flood of superabundant song not have submerged all landmarks? Be the cause what it may, the fact remains that they did not. The landmarks of history stand clear and fixed, each in its own place unremoved; and through that forest-growth the highways of history run on beneath over-arching, not interfering, boughs. The age of the predominance of Ulster does not clash with the age of the predominance of Tara; the Temairian kings are not mixed with the contemporary Fians. The chaos of the Nibelungen is not found here, nor the confusion of the Scotch ballads blending all the ages into one.

It is not imaginative strength that produces confusion, but imaginative weakness. The strong imagination which perceives definitely and realises vividly will not tolerate that obscurity so dear to all those who worship the eidōla of the cave. Of each of these ages, the primary impressions were made in the bardic mind during the life-time of the heroes who gave to the epoch its character; and a strong impression made in such a mind could not have been easily dissipated or obscured. For it must be remembered, that the bardic literature of Ireland was committed to the custody of guardians

whose character we ought not to forget. The bards were not the people, but a class. They were not so much a class as an organisation and fraternity acknowledging the authority of one elected chief. They were not loose wanderers, but a power in the State, having duties and privileges. The ard-ollav ranked next to the king, and his eric was kingly. Thus there was an educated body of public opinion entrusted with the preservation of the literature and history of the country, and capable of repressing the aberrations of individuals.

But the question arises, Did they so repress such perversions of history as their wandering undisciplined members might commit? Too much, of course, must not reasonably be expected. It was an age of creative thought, and such thought is difficult to control; but that one of the prime objects and prime works of the bards, as an organisation, was to preserve a record of a certain class of historical facts is certain. The succession of the kings and of the great princely families was one of these. The tribal system, with the necessity of affinity as a ground of citizenship, demanded such a preservation of pedigrees in every family, and particularly in the kingly houses. One of the chief objects of the triennial feis of Tara was the revision of such records by the general assembly of the bards, under the presidency of the Ard-Ollav of Ireland. In the more ancient times, such records were rhymed and

alliterated, and committed to memory—a practice which, we may believe on the authority of Cæsar, treating of the Gauls, continued long after the introduction of letters. Even at those local assemblies also, which corresponded to great central and national feis of Tara, the bards were accustomed to meet for that purpose. In a poem,* descriptive of the fair† of Garmān, we see this—

> "Feasts with the great feasts of Temair,
> Fairs with the fairs of Emania,
> Annals there are verified."

In the existing literature we see two great divisions. On the one hand the epical, a realm of the most riotous activity of thought; on the other, the annalistic and genealogical, bald and bare to the last degree, a mere skeleton. They represent the two great hemispheres of the bardic mind, the latter controlling the former. Hence the orderly sequence of the cyclic literature; hence the strong confining banks between which the torrent of song rolls down through those centuries in which the bardic imagination reached its height. The consentaneity of the annals and the literature furnishes a trustworthy guide to the general course of history, until its guidance is barred by *a priori* considerations of a weightier nature, or by the statements of writers,

* O'Curry's Manners and Customs, Vol. I., page 543.

† On the full meaning of this word "fair," see Chap. xiii., Vol. I.

having sources of information not open to us. For instance, the stream of Irish history must, for philosophical reasons, be no further traceable than to that point at which it issues from the enchanted land of the Tuátha Dē Danān. At the limit at which the gods appear, men and history must disappear; while on the other hand, the statement of Tiherna, that the foundation of Emain Macha by Kimbay is the first certain date in Irish history, renders it undesirable to attach more historical reality of characters, adorning the ages prior to B.C. 299, than we could to such characters as Romulus in Roman, or Theseus in Athenian history.

I desire here to record my complete and emphatic dissent from the opinions advanced by a writer in Hermathēna on the subject of the Ogham inscriptions, and the introduction into this country of the art of writing. A cypher, *i.e.*, an alphabet derived from a pre-existing alphabet, the Ogham may or may not have been. I advance no opinion upon that, but an invention of the Christian times it most assuredly was not. No sympathetic and careful student of the Irish bardic literature can possibly come to such a conclusion. The bardic poems relating to the heroes of the ethnic times are filled with allusions to Ogham inscriptions on stone, and contain some references to books of timber; but in my own reading I have not met with a single passage in that

literature alluding to books of parchment and to rounded letters.

If the Ogham was derived from the Roman characters introduced by Christian missionaries, then these characters would be the more ancient, and Ogham the more modern; books and Roman characters would be the more poetical, and inscriptions on stone and timber in the Ogham characters the more prosaic. The bards relating the lives and deeds of the ancient heroes, would have ascribed to their times parchment books and the Roman characters, not stone and wood, and the Ogham.

In these compositions, whenever they were reduced to the form in which we find them to-day, the ethnic character of the times and the ethnic character of the heroes are clearly and universally observed. The ancient, the remote, the archaic clings to this literature. As Homer does not allude to writing, though all scholars agree that he lived in a lettered age, so the old bards do not allude to parchment and Roman characters, though the Irish epics, as distinguished from their component parts, reached their fixed state and their final development in times subsequent to the introduction of Christianity.

When and how a knowledge of letters reached this island we know not. From the analogy of Gaul, we may conclude that they were known for some time prior to their use by the bards. Cæsar tells us that the

Gaulish bards and druids did not employ letters for the preservation of their lore, but trusted to memory, assisted, doubtless, as in this country, by the mechanical and musical aid of verse. Whether the Ogham was a native alphabet or a derivative from another, it was at first employed only to a limited extent. Its chief use was to preserve the name of buried kings and heroes in the stone that was set above their tombs. It was, perhaps, invented, and certainly became fashionable on this account, straight strokes being more easily cut in stone than rounded or uncial characters. For the same reason it was generally employed by those who inscribed timber tablets, which formed the primitive book, ere they discovered or learned how to use pen, ink, and parchment. The use of Ogham was partially practised in the Christian period for sepultural purposes, being venerable and sacred from time. Hence the discovery of Ogham-inscribed stones in Christian cemeteries. On the other hand, the fact that the majority of these stones are discovered in raths and ferts, *i.e.*, the tombs of our Pagan ancestors, corroborates the fact implied in all the bardic literature, that the characters employed in the ethnic times were Oghamic, and affords another proof of the close conservative spirit of the bards in their transcription, compilation, or reformation of the old epics.

The full force of the concurrent authority of the

bardic literature to the above effect can only be felt by one who has read that literature with care. He will find in all the epics no trace of original invention, but always a studied and conscientious following of authority. This being so, he will conclude that the universal ascription of Ogham, and Ogham only, to the ethnic times, arises solely from the fact that such was the alphabet then employed.

If letters were unknown in those times, the example of Homer shows how unlikely the later poets would have been to outrage so violently the whole spirit of the heroic literature. If rounded letters were then used, why the universal ascription of the late invented Ogham which, as we know from the cemeteries and other sources, was unpopular in the Christian age.

Cryptic, too, it was not. The very passages quoted in Hermathena to support this opinion, so far from doing so prove actually the reverse. When Cuculain came down into Meath on his first* foray, he found, on the lawn of the Dûn of the sons of Nectan, a pillar-stone with this inscription in Ogham—"Let no one pass without an offer of a challenge of single combat." The inscription was, of course, intended for all to read. Should there be any bardic passage in which Ogham inscriptions are alluded to as if an obscure form of writing, the natural explanation is, that this kind of

* Vol. I., page 155.

writing was passing or had passed into desuetude at the time that particular passage was composed; but I have never met with any such. The ancient bard, who, in the Tân-bo-Cooalney, describes the slaughter of Cailitin and his sons by Cuculain, states that there was an inscription to that effect, written in Ogham, upon the stone over their tomb, beginning thus—"Take notice"—evidently intended for all to read. The tomb, by the way, was a rath—again showing the ethnic character of the alphabet.

In the Annals of the Four Masters, at the date 1499 B.C., we read these words:—

"THE FLEET OF THE SONS OF MILITH CAME TO IRELAND TO TAKE IT FROM THE TUATHA DE DANAN," *i.e.*, the gods of the ethnic Irish.

Without pausing to enquire into the reasonableness of the date, it will suffice now to state that at this point the bardic history of Ireland cleaves asunder into two great divisions—the mythological or divine on the one hand, and the historical or heroic-historical on the other. The first is an enchanted land—the world of the Tuátha Dĕ Danān—the country of the gods. There we see Mananān with his mountain-sundering sword, the Fray-garta; there Lu Lamfada, the deliverer, pondering over his mysteries; there Bove Derg and his

fatal* swine-herd, Lir and his ill-starred children, Mac Mánar and his harp shedding death from its stricken wires, Angus Og, the beautiful, and he who was called the mighty father, Eochaidh† Mac Elathān, a land populous with those who had partaken of the feast of Goibneen, and whom, therefore, weapons could not slay, who had eaten‡ at the the table of Mananān, and would never grow old, who had invented for themselves the Fæd Fia, and might not be seen of the gross eyes of men; there steeds like Anvarr crossing the wet sea like a firm plain; there ships whose rudder was the will,

* Every feast to which he came ended in blood. He was present at the death of Conairey Mor, Chap. xxxiii., Vol. I.

† Ay-o-chee, written Yeoha in Vol. I.

‡ In early Greek literature the province of history has been already separated from that of poetry. The ancient bardic lore and primæval traditions were refined to suit the new and sensitive poetic taste. No commentator has been able to explain the nature of ambrosia. In the genuine bardic times, no such vague euphuism would have been tolerated as that of Homer on this subject. The nature of Olympian ambrosia would have been told in language as clear as that in which Homer describes the preparation of that Pramnian bowl for which Nestor and Machaon waited while Hecamede was grating over it the goat's milk cheese, or that in which the Irish bards described the ambrosia of the Tuátha Dē Danān, which, indeed, was no more poetic and awe-inspiring than plain bacon prepared by Mananān from his herd of enchanted pigs, living invisible like himself in the plains of Tir-na-n-Og, the land of the ever-young. On the other hand, there is a vagueness about the Fæd Fia which would seem to indicate the growth of a more awe-stricken mood in describing things supernatural. The Fæd Fia of the Greek gods has been refined by Homer into "much darkness," which, from an artistic point of view, one can hardly help imagining that Homer nodded as he wrote.

and whose sails and oars the wish, of those they bore ;* there hounds like that one of Ioroway, and spears like fiery flying serpents. These are the Tuátha Dē Danān,† fairy princes, Tuátha ; gods, Dē ; of Dana, Danān, otherwise Ana and the Moreega, or great queen ; mater‡ deorum Hibernensium—"well she used to cherish§ the gods." Limitless, this divine population, dwelling in all the seas and estuaries, river and lakes, mountains and fairy dells, in that enchanted Erin which was theirs.

But they have not started into existence suddenly, like the gods of Rome, nor is their genealogy confined to a single generation like those of Greece. Behind them extends a long line of ancestors, and a history reaching into the remotest depths of the past. As the Greek gods dethroned the Titans, so the Irish gods drove out or subjected the giants of the Fir-bolgs ; but in the Irish mythology, we find both gods and giants descended from other ancient races of deities, called the Clanna Nemedh and the Fōmoroh, and these a branch of a divine cycle ; yet more ancient the race of Partholān, while Partholān himself is not the eldest.

* *Cf.* The barks of the Phœnicians in the Odyssey.

† A mystery still hangs over this three-formed name. The full expression, Tuátha Dē Danan, is that generally employed, less frequently Tuátha Dē, and sometimes, but not often, Tuátha. Tuátha also means people. In mediæval times the name lost its sublime meaning, and came to mean merely "fairy," no greater significance, indeed, attaching to the invisible people of the island after Christianity had destroyed their godhood.

‡ Cormac's Glossary. § Scholiast noting same Glossary.

The history of the Italian gods is completely lost. For all that the early Roman literature tells us of their origin, they may have been either self-created or eternal. Rome was a seedling shaken from some old perished civilisation. The Romans created their own empire, but they inherited their gods. They supply no example of an Aryan nation evolving its own mythology and religion. Regal Rome, as we know from Niebuhr, was not the root from which our Rome sprang, but an old imperial city, from whose ashes sprang that Rome we all know so well. The mythology of the Latin writers came to them full-grown.

The gods of Greece were a creation of the Greek mind, indeed; but of their ancestry, *i.e.*, of their development from more ancient divine tribes, we know little. Like Pallas, they all but start into existence suddenly full-grown. Between the huge physical entities of the Greek theogonists and the Olympian gods, there intervenes but a single generation. For this loss of the Grecian mythology, and this substitution of Nox and Chaos for the remote ancestors of the Olympians, we have to thank the early Greek philosophers, and the general diffusion of a rude scientific knowledge, imparting a physical complexion to the mythological memory of the Greeks.

In the theogony of the ancient inhabitants of this country, we have an example of a slowly-growing, slowly-

changing mythology, such as no other nation in the world can supply. The ancestry of the Irish gods is not bounded by a single generation or by twenty. The Tuátha Dē Danān of the ancient Irish are the final outcome and last development of a mythology which we can see advancing step by step, one divine tribe pushing out another, one family of gods swallowing up another, or perishing under the hands of time and change, to make room for another. From Angus Og, the god of youth and love and beauty, whose fit home was the woody slopes of the Boyne, where it winds around Rosnaree, we count fourteen generations to Nemedh and four to Partholān, and Partholān is not the earliest. As the bards recorded with a zeal and minuteness, so far as I can see, without parallel, the histories of the families to which they were adscript, so also they recorded with equal patience and care the far-extending pedigrees of those other families—invisible indeed, but to them more real and more awe-inspiring—who dwelt by the sacred lakes and rivers, and in the folds of the fairy hills, and the great raths and cairns reared for them by pious hands.

The extent, diversity, and populousness of the Irish mythological cycles, the history of the Irish gods, and the gradual growth of that mythology of which the Tuátha Dē Danān, *i.e.*, the gods of the historic period, were the final development, can only be rightly appre-

hended by one who reads the bardic literature as it deals with this subject. That literature, however, so far from having been printed and published, has not even been translated, but still moulders in the public libraries of Europe, those who, like myself, are not professed Irish scholars, being obliged to collect their information piece-meal from quotations and allusions of those who have written upon the subject in the English or Latin language. For to read the originals aright needs many years of labour, the Irish tongue presenting at different epochs the characteristics of distinct languages, while the peculiarities of ancient caligraphy, in the defaced and illegible manuscripts, form of themselves quite a large department of study. Stated succinctly, the mythological record of the bards, with its chronological decorations, runs thus :—

AGE OF KEASAIR.

2379 B.C. the gods of the KEASAIRIAN cycle, Bith, Lāra, and Fintann, and their wives, KEASAIR, Barrān and Balba; their sacred places, Carn Keshra, Keasair's tomb or temple, on the banks of the Boyle, Ard Lāran on the Wexford Coast, Fert Fintann on the shores of Lough Derg.

About the same time Lot Luaimenich, Lot of the Lower Shannon, an ancient sylvan deity.

AGE OF PARTHOLAN AND THE EARLIEST FOMORIAN GODS.

2057 B.C. a new spiritual dynasty, of which PARTHOLAN was father and king. Though their worship was extended over Ireland, which is shown by the many different places connected with their history, yet the hill of Tallaght, ten miles from Dublin, was where they were chiefly adored. Here to the present day are the mounds and barrows raised in honour of the deified heroes of this cycle, PARTHOLAN himself, his wife Delgna, his sons, Rury, Slaney, and Laighlinni, and among others, the father of Irish hospitality, bearing the expressive name of Beer. Now first appear the Fōmoroh giant princes, under the leadership of curt Kical, son of Niul, son of Garf, son of U-Mōr—a divine cycle intervening between KEASAIR and PARTHOLAN, but not of sufficient importance to secure a separate chapter and distinct place in the annals. Battles now between the Clan Partholān and the Fō-moroh, on the plain of Ith, beside the river Finn, Co. Donegal, so called from Ith,* son of Brōgan, the most ancient of the heroes, slain here by the Tuátha Dē Danān, but more anciently known by some lost Fomorian name; also at Iorrus Domnan, now Erris, Co. Mayo, where Kical and his Fomorians first reached Ireland. These

* See Vol. I., p. 60.

battles are a parable—objective representations of a fact in the mental history of the ancient Irish—typifying the invisible war waged between Partholanian and Fomorian deities for the spiritual sovereignty of the Gæl.

AGE OF THE NEMEDIAN GODS AND SECOND CYCLE OF THE FOMORIANS.

1700 B.C. age of the NEMEDIAN divinities, a later branch of the PARTHOLANIAN *vide post* NEMEDIAN pedigree. NEMEDH, his wife Maca (first appearance of Macha, the war goddess, who gavè her name to Armagh, *i.e.*, Ard Macha, the Height of Macha), Iarbanel; Fergus, the Red-sided, and Starn, sons of Nemedh; Beothah, son of Iarbanel; Erglann, son of Beōan, son of Starn; Simēon Brac, son of Starn; Ibath, son of Beothach; Britan Mæl, son of Fergus. This must be remembered, that not one of the almost countless names that figure in the Irish mythology is of fanciful origin. They all represent antique heroes and heroines, their names being preserved in connection with those monuments which were raised for purposes of sepulture or cult.

Wars now between the Clanna Nemedh and the second cycle of the Fōmoroh, led this time by Fæbar and Morc, sons of Dēla, and Coning, son of Fæbar; battles at Ros Freachan, now Rosreahan, barony of Murresk,

Co. Mayo, at Slieve Blahma* and Murbolg, in Dalaradia (Murbolg, *i.e.*, the stronghold of the giants,) also at Tor Coning, now Tory Island.

FIRBOLGS AND THIRD CYCLE OF THE FOMOROH.

1525 B.C. Age of the FIRBOLGS and third cycle of the Fomorians, once gods, but expulsed from their sovereignty by the Tuátha Dē Danān, after which they loom through the heroic literature as giants of the elder time, overthrown by the gods. From the FIR-BOLGS were descended, or claimed to have descended, the Connaught warriors who fought with Queen Meave against Cuculain, also the Clan Humōr, appearing in the Second Volume, also the heroes of 'Ossian, the Fianna Eireen. Even in the time of Keating, Irish families traced thither their pedigrees. The great chiefs of the FIR-BOLGIC dynasty were the five sons of Dela, Gann, Genann, Sengann, Rury, and Slaney, with their wives Fuad, Edain, Anust, Cnucha, and Libra; also their last and most potent king, EOCAIDH MAC ERC, son of Ragnal, son of Genann, whose tomb

* Slieve Blahma, now Slieve Bloom, a mountain range famous in our mythology; one of the peaks, Ard Erin, sacred to *Eiré*, a goddess of the Tuátha Dē Danān, who has given her name to the island.

The sites of all these mythological battles, where they are not placed in the haunted mountains, will be found to be a place of raths and cromlechs.

or temple may be seen to-day at Ballysadare, Co. Sligo, on the edge of the sea.

The Fomorians of this age were ruled over by Balor Beimenna and his wife Kethlenn. Their grandson was Lu Lamáda, one of the noblest of the Irish gods.

The last of the mythological cycles is that of the Tuátha Dē Danān, whose character, attributes, and history will, I hope, be rendered interesting and intelligible in my account of Cuculain and the Red Branch of Ulster.

Irish history has suffered from rationalism almost more than from neglect and ignorance. The conjectures of the present century are founded upon mediæval attempts to reduce to verisimilitude and historical probability what was by its nature quite incapable of such treatment. The mythology of the Irish nation, being relieved of the marvellous and sublime, was set down with circumstantial dates as a portion of the country's history by the literary men of the middle ages. Unable to excide from the national narrative those mythological beings who filled so great a place in the imagination of the times, and unable, as Christians, to describe them in their true character as gods, or, as patriots, in the character which they believed them to possess, namely, demons, they rationalized the whole of the mythological period with names, dates, and ordered generations, putting men for gods, flesh and blood for that invisible

might, till the page bristled with names and dates, thus formulating, as annals, what was really the theogony and mythology of their country. The error of the mediæval historians is shared by the not wiser moderns. In the generations of the gods we seem to see pre-historic racial divisions and large branches of the Aryan family, an error which results from a neglect of the bardic literature, and a consequently misdirected study of the annals.

As history, the pre-Milesian record contains but a limited supply of objective truths; but as theogony, and the history of the Irish gods, these much abused chronicles are as true as the roll of the kings of England.

These divine nations, with their many successive generations and dynasties, constitute a single family; they are all inter-connected and spring from common sources, and where the literature permits us to see more clearly, the earlier races exhibit a common character. Like a human clan, the elements of this divine family grew and died, and shed forth seedlings which, in time, over-grew and killed the parent stock. Great names became obscure and passed away, and new ones grew and became great. Gods, worshipped by the whole nation, declined and became topical, and minor deities expanding, became national. Gods lost their immortality, and were remembered as giants of the

old time—mighty men, which were of yore, men of renown.

"The gods which were of old time rest in their tombs,"

sang the Egyptians, consciously ascribing mortality even to gods. Such was Mac Erc, King of Fir-bolgs. His temple,* beside the sea at Iorrus Domnan,† became his tomb. Daily the salt tide embraces the feet of the great tumulus, regal amongst its smaller comrades, where the last king of Fir-bolgs was worshipped by his people. "Good ‡ were the years of the sovereignty of Mac Erc. There was no wet or tempestuous weather in Ireland, nor was there any unfruitful year." Such were all the predecessors of the children of Dana—gods which were of old times, that rest in their tombs; and the days, too, of the Tuàtha Dē Danān were numbered. They, too, smitten by a more celestial light, vanished from their hills, like Ossian lamenting over his own heroes; those others still mightier, might say:—

"Once every step which we took might be heard throughout the firmament. Now, all have gone, they have melted into the air."

But that divine tree, though it had its branches in fairy-land, had its roots in the soil of Erin. An unceasing translation of heroes into Tir-na-n-ōg went on

* Strand near Ballysadare, Co. Sligo.

† Keating—evidently quoting a bardic historian.

‡ Temple—vide post.

through time, the fairy-world of the bards, receiving every century new inhabitants, whose humbler human origin being forgotten, were supplied there with both wives and children. The apotheosis of great men went forward, tirelessly; the hero of one epoch becoming the god of the next, until the formation of the Tuátha Dē Danān, who represent the gods of the historic ages. Had the advent of exact genealogy been delayed, and the creative imagination of the bards suffered to work on for a couple of centuries longer, unchecked by the historical conscience, Cuculain's human origin would, perhaps, have been forgotten, and he would have been numbered amongst the Tuátha Dē Danān, probably, as the son of Lu Lamfáda and the Mōreega, his patron deities. It was, indeed, a favourite fancy of the bards that not Sualtam, but Lu Lamfáda himself, was his father; this, however, in a spiritual or supernatural sense, for his age was far removed from that of the Tuátha Dē Danān, and falling well within the scope of the historic period. Even as late as the time of Alexander, the Greeks could believe a great contemporary warrior to be of divine origin, and the son of Zeus.

When the Irish bards began to elaborate a general history of their country, they naturally commenced with the enumeration of the elder gods. I at one time suspected that the long pedigrees running be-

tween those several divisions of the mythological period were the invention of mediæval historians, anxious to spin out the national record, that it might reach to Shinar and the dispersion. Not only, however, was such fabrication completely foreign to the genius of the literature, but in the fragments of those early divine cycles, we see that each of these personages was at one time the centre of a literature, and holds a definite place as regards those who went before and came after. These pedigrees, as I said before, have no historical meaning, being pre-Milesian, and therefore absolutely pre-historic; but as the genealogy of the gods, and as representing the successive generations of that invisible family, whose history not one or ten bards, but the whole bardic and druidic organisation of the island, delighted to record, collate, and verify—those pedigrees are as reliable as that of any of the regal clans. They represent accurately the mythological panorama, as it unrolled itself slowly through the centuries before the imagination and spirit of our ancestors—accurately that divine drama, millennium-lasting, with its exits and entrances of gods. Millennium-lasting, and more so, for it is plain that one divine generation represents on the average a much greater space of time than a generation of mortal men. The former probably represents the period which would elapse before a hero would become so divine, that is, so consecrated in the

imagination of the country, as to be received into the family of the gods. Cuculain died in the era of the Incarnation, three hundred years, if not more, before the country even began to be Christianised, yet he is never spoken of as anything but a great hero, from which one of two things would follow, either that the apotheosis of heroes needed the lapse of centuries, or that, during the first, second, third, and fourth centuries, the historical conscience was so enlightened, and a positive definite knowledge of the past so universal, that the translation of heroes into the divine clans could no longer take place. The latter is indeed the more correct view; but the reader will, I think, agree with me that the divine generations, taken generally, represent more than the average space of man's life. To what remote unimagined distances of time those earlier cycles extend has been shown by an examination of the tombs of the lower Moy Tura. The ancient heroes there interred were those who, as Fir-bolgs, preceded the reign of the Tuáth Dē Danān, coming long after the Clanna Nemedh in the divine cycle, who were themselves preceded by the children of Partholān, who were subsequent to the Queen Keasair. Such then being the position in the divine cycle of the Fir-bolgs, an examination of the Firbolgic raths on Moy Tura has revealed only implements of stone, proving demonstratively that the early divine cycles originated before the bronze age in Ire-

land, whenever that commenced. Those heroes who, as Fir-bolgs, received divine honours, lived in the age of stone. So far is it from being the case, that the mythological record has been extended and unduly stretched, to enable the monkish historians to connect the Irish pedigrees with those of the Mosaic record, that it has, I believe, been contracted for this purpose.

The reader will be now prepared to peruse with some interest and understanding one or two of the mythological pedigrees. To these I have at times appended the dates, as given in the chronicles, to show how the early historians rationalised the pre-historic record.

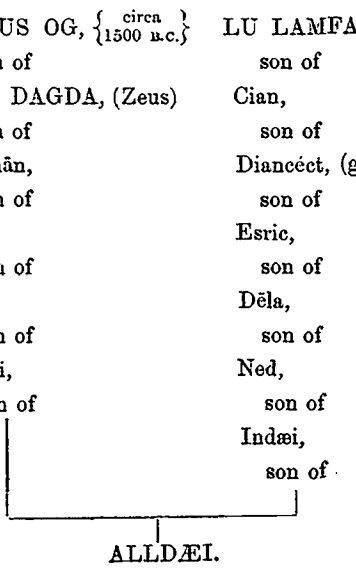
Angus Og, the Beautiful, represents the Greek Erōs. He was surnamed Og, or young; Mac-an-Og, or the son of youth; Mac-an-Dagda, son of the Dagda. He was represented with a harp, and attended by bright birds, his own transformed kisses, at whose singing love arose in the hearts of youths and maidens. To him and to his father the great tumulus of New Grange, upon the Boyne, was sacred.

> "I visited the Royal Brugh that stands
> By the dark-rolling waters of the Boyne,
> Where Angus Og magnificently dwells."

He was the patron god of Diarmid, the Paris of Ossian's Fianna, and removed him into Tir-na-n-Og,

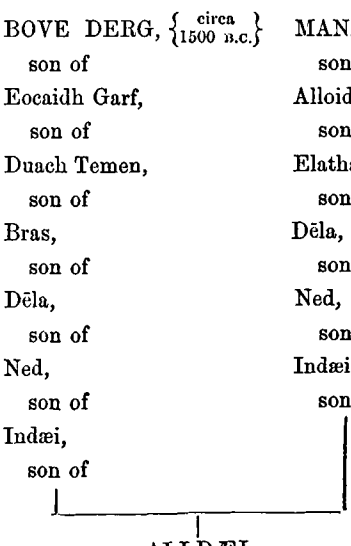
when he died, having been ripped by the tusks of the wild boar on the peaks of Slieve Gulbān.

Lu Lamfāda was the patron god of Cuculain. He was surnamed Ioldāna, as the source of the sciences, and represented the Greek Apollo. The latter was *αργυργυροτοξός*, but Lu was a sling-bearing god. Of Fomorian descent on the mother's side, he joined his father's people, the Tuátha Dē Danān, in the great war against the Fōmoroh. He is principally celebrated for his oppression of the sons of Turānn, in vengeance for the murder of his father.



Amongst other Irish gods was Bove Derg, who dwelt invisible in the Galtee mountains, and in the hills above Lough Derg. The transformed children alluded to in Vol. I. were his grand-children. It was his goldsmith Lēn, who gave its ancient name to the Lakes of Killarney, Locha Lein. Here by the lake he worked, surrounded by rainbows and showers of fiery dew.

Mananān was the god of the sea, of winds and storms, and most skilled in magic lore. He was friendly to Cuculain, and was invoked by seafaring men. He was called the Far Shee of the promontories.



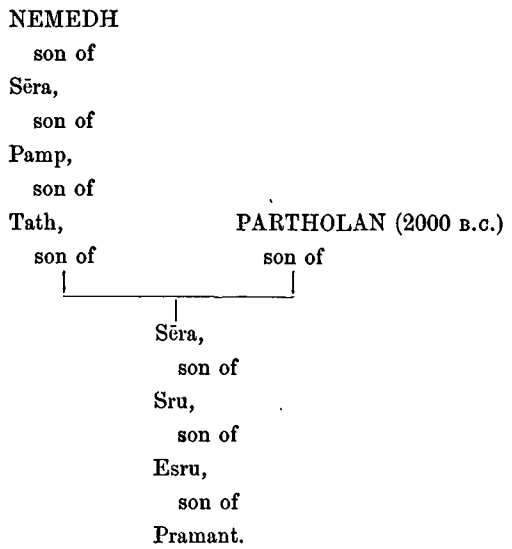
The Tuátha Dē Danān may be counted literally by the hundred, each with a distinct history, and all descended from Alldæi.

From Alldæi the pedigree runs back thus :—

Alldæi
son of
Tath,
son of
Tabarn,
son of
Enna,
son of
Baath,
son of
Ebat,
son of
Betah,
son of
Iarbanel,
son of
NEMEDH (circa 1700 B.C.)

Nemedh, as I have said, forms one of the great epochs

in the mythological record. As will be seen, he and the earlier Partholān have a common source :—



The connection between Keasair, the earliest of the Irish gods, and the rest of the cycle, I have not discovered, but am confident of its existence.

How this divine cycle can be expunged from the history of Ireland I am at a loss to see. The account which a nation renders of itself must, and always does, stand at the head of every history.

How different is this from the history and genealogy of the Greek gods which runs thus :—

The Olympian gods,
Titans,
Physical entities, Nox, Chaos, &c.

The Greek gods, undoubtedly, had a long ancestry extending into the depths of the past, but the sudden advent of civilisation broke up the bardic system before the historians could become philosophical, or philosophers interested in antiquities.

But the Irish history corrects our view with regard to other matters connected with the gods of the Aryan nations of Europe also.

All the nations of Europe lived at one time under the bardic and druidic system, and under that system imagined their gods and elaborated their various theogonies, yet, in no country in Europe has a bardic literature been preserved except in Ireland, for no thinking man can believe Homer to have been a product of that rude type of civilisation of which he sings. This being the case, modern philosophy, accounting for the origin of the classical deities by guesses and *a priori* reasonings, has almost universally adopted that explanation which I have, elsewhere, called Wordsworthian, and which derives them directly from the imagination personifying the aspects of nature.

" In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
With music lulled his indolent repose,
And in some fit of weariness if he,
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
A distant strain far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,
A beardless youth who touched a golden lute
And filled the illumined groves with ravishment—
. . . . . .
" Sunbeams upon distant hills,
Gliding apace with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed
Into fleet oreads, sporting visibly."

This is pretty, but untrue. In all the ancient Irish literature we find the connection of the gods, both those who survived into the historic times, and those whom they had dethroned, with the raths and cairns perpetually and almost universally insisted upon. The scene of the destruction of the Firbolgs will be found to be a place of tombs, the metropolis of the Fomorians a place of tombs, and a place of tombs the sacred home of the Tuátha along the shores of the Boyne. Doubtless, they are represented also as dwelling in the hills, lakes, and rivers, but still the connection between the great raths and cairns and the gods is never really forgotten. When the floruit of a god has expired, he is assigned a tomb in one of the great tumuli. No one can peruse this ancient literature without seeing clearly the genesis of the Irish gods, *videlicet* heroes, passing,

through the imagination and through the region of poetic representation, into the world of the supernatural. When a king died, his people raised his ferta, set up his stone, and engraved upon it, at least in later times, his name in ogham. They celebrated his death with funeral lamentations and funeral games, and listened to the bards chanting his prowess, his liberality, and his beauty. In the case of great warriors, these games and lamentations became periodical. It is distinctly recorded in many places, for instance in connection with Taylti, who gave her name to Taylteen and Garmān, who gave her name to Loch Garmān, now Wexford, and with Lu Lamfáda, whose annual worship gave its name to the Kalends of August. Gradually, as his actual achievements became more remote, and the imagination of the bards, proportionately, more unrestrained, he would pass into the world of the supernatural. Even in the case of a hero so surrounded with historic light as Cuculain we find a halo, as of godhood, often settling around him. His gray warsteed had already passed into the realm of mythical representation, as a second avatar of the Liath Macha, the grey war-horse of the war-goddess Macha. This could be believed, even in the days when the imagination was controlled by the annalists and tribal heralds.

The gods of the Irish were their deified ancestors. They were not the offspring of the poetic imagination,

personifying the various aspects of nature. Traces, indeed, we find of their influence over the operations of nature, but they are, upon the whole, slight and unimportant. From nature they extract her secrets by their necromantic and magical labours, but nature is as yet too great to be governed and impelled by them. The Irish Apollo had not yet entered into the sun.

Like every country upon which imperial Rome did not leave the impress of her genius, Ireland, in these ethnic times, attained only a partial unity. The chief king indeed presided at Tara, and enjoyed the reputation and emoluments flowing to him on that account, but, upon the whole, no Irish king exercised more than a local sovereignty; they were all reguli, petty kings, and their direct authority was small. This being the case, it would appear to me that in the more ancient times the death of a king would not be an event which would disturb a very extensive district, and that, though his tomb might be considerable, it would not be gigantic.

Now on the banks of the Boyne, opposite Rosnaree, there stands a tumulus, said to be the greatest in Europe. It covers acres of ground, being of proportionate height. The earth is confined by a compact stone wall about twelve feet high. The central chamber, made of huge irregular pebbles, is about twenty feet from ground to roof, communicating with the outer air by a flagged passage. Immense pebbles, drawn

from the County of Antrim, stand around it, each of which, even to move at all, would require the labour of many men, assisted with mechanical appliances. It is, of course, impossible to make an accurate estimate of the expenditure of labour necessary for the construction of such a work, but it would seem to me to require thousands of men working for years. Can we imagine that a petty king of those times could, after his death, when probably his successor had enough to do to sustain his new authority, command such labour merely to provide for himself a tomb. If this tomb were raised to the hero whose name it bears immediately after his death, and in his mundane character, he must have been such a king as never existed in Ireland, even in the late Christian times. Even Brian of the Tributes himself, could not have commanded such a sepulture, or anything like it, living though he did, probably, two thousand years later than that Eocaidh Mac Elathān, whenever he did live. There is a *nodus* here needing a god to solve it.

Returning now to what would most likely take place after the interment of a hero, we may well imagine that the size of his tomb would be in proportion to the love which he inspired, where no accidental causes would interfere with the gratification of that feeling. Of one of his heroes, Ossian, sings—

> "We made his cairn great and high
> Like a king's."

After that there would be periodical meetings in his honour, the celebration of games, solemn recitations by bards, singing his *ἀριστεῖα*. Gradually the new wine would burst the old bottles. The ever-active, eager-loving imagination would behold the champion grown to heroic proportions, the favourite of the gods, the performer of superhuman feats. The tomb, which was once commensurate with the love and reverence which he inspired, would seem so now no longer. The tribal bards, wandering or attending the great fairs and assemblies, would disperse among strangers and neighbours a knowledge of his renown. In the same cemetery or neighbourhood their might be other tombs of heroes now forgotten, while he, whose fame was in every bardic mouth in all that region, was honoured only with a tomb no greater than theirs. The mere king or champion, grown into a topical hero, would need a greater tomb.

Ere long again, owing to the bardic fraternity, who, though coming from Innishowen or Cape Clear, formed a single community, the topical hero would, in some cases, where his character was such as would excite deeper reverence and greater fame, grow into a national hero, and a still nobler tomb be required, in order that the visible memorial might prove commensurate with the imaginative conception.

Now all this time the periodic celebrations, the

games, and lamentations, and songs would be assuming a more solemn character. Awe would more and more mingle with the other feelings inspired by his name. Certain rites and a certain ritual would attend those annual games and lamentations, which would formerly not have been suitable, and eventually, when the hero, slowly drawing nearer through generations, if not centuries, at last reached Tir-na-n-Og, and was received into the family of the gods, a religious feeling of a different nature would mingle with the more secular celebration of his memory, and his rath or cairn would assume in their eyes a new character.

To an ardent imaginative people the complete extinction by death of a much-loved hero would even at first be hardly possible. That the tomb which held his ashes should be looked upon as the house of the hero must have been, even shortly after his interment, a prevailing sentiment, whether expressed or not. Also, the feeling must have been present, that the hero in whose honour they performed the annual games, and periodically chanted the remembrance of whose achievements, saw and heard those things that were done in his honour. But as the celebration became greater and more solemn, this feeling would become more strong, and as the tomb, from a small heap of stones or low mound, grew into an enormous and imposing rath, the belief that this was the hero's house, in which he

invisibly dwelt, could not be avoided, even before they ceased to regard him as a disembodied hero; and after the hero had mingled with the divine clans, and was numbered amongst the gods, the idea that the rath was a tomb could not logically be entertained. As a god, was he not one of those who had eaten of the food provided by Mananān, and therefore never died. The rath would then become his house or temple. As matter of fact, the bardic writings teem with this idea. From reason and probability, we would with some certainty conclude that the great tumulus of New Grange was the temple of some Irish god; but that it was so, we know as a fact. The father and king of the gods is alluded to as dwelling there, going out from thence, and returning again, and there holding his invisible court.

> "Behold the *Sid* before your eyes,
> It is manifest to you that it is a king's mansion."*

"Bove Derg went to visit the Dagda at the Brugh of Mac-An-Og."†

Here also dwelt Angus Og, the son of the Dagda. In this, his spiritual court or temple, he is represented as having entertained Oscar and the Ossianic heroes, and thither he conducted‡ the spirit of Diarmid, that he might have him for ever there.

In the etymology also we see the origin of the Irish

* O'Curry's Manuscript Materials of Irish History, page 505.

† "Dream of Angus," Révue Celtique, Vol. III., page 349.

‡ Publications of Ossianic Society, Vol. III., page 201.

gods. A grave in Irish is Sid, the disembodied spirit is Sidhe, and this latter word glosses Tuátha Dē Danān.

The fact that the grave of a hero developed slowly into the temple of a god, explains certain obscurities in the annals and literature. As a hero was exalted into a god, so in turn a god sank into a hero, or rather into the race of the giants. The elder gods, conquered and destroyed by the younger, could no longer be regarded as really divine, for were they not proved to be mortal? The development of the temple from the tomb was not forgotten, the whole country being filled with such tombs and incipient temples, from the great Brugh on the Boyne to the smallest mound in any of the cemeteries. Thus, when the elder gods lost their spiritual sovereignty, and their destruction at the hands of the younger took the form of great battles, then as the god was forced to become a giant, so his temple was remembered to be a tomb. Doubtless, in his own territory, divine honours were still paid him; but in the national imagination and in the classical literature and received history, he was a giant of the olden time, slain by the gods, and interred in the rath which bore his name. Such was the great Mac Erc, King of Firbolgs.

Again, when the mediæval Christians ceased to regard the Tuátha Dē Danān as devils, and proceeded to

rationalise the divine record as the ethnic bards had rationalised the history of the early gods; the Tuátha Dē Danān, shorn of immortality, became ancient heroes who had lived their day and died, and the greater raths, no longer the houses of the gods, figure in that literature irrationally rational, as their tombs. Thus we are gravely informed* that "the Dagda Mōr, after the second battle of Moy Tura, retired to the Brugh on the Boyne, where he died from the venom of the wounds inflicted on him by Kethlenn"—the Fomorian amazon—"and was there interred." Even in this passage the writer seems to have been unable to dispossess his mind quite of the traditional belief that the Brugh was the Dagda's house.

The peculiarity of this mound, in addition to its size, is the spaciousness of the central chamber. This was that germ which, but for the overthrow of the bardic religion, would have developed into a temple in the classic sense of the word. A two-fold motive would have impelled the growing civilisation in this direction. A desire to make the house of the god as spacious within as it was great without, and a desire to transfer his worship, or the more esoteric and solemn part of it, from without to within. Either the absence of architectural knowledge, or the force of conservatism, or the advent of the Christian missionaries, checked any further development on these lines.

* Annals of Four Masters.

Elsewhere the tomb, instead of developing as a tumulus or barrow, produced the effect of greatness by huge circumvallations of earth, and massive walls of stone. Such is the temple of Ned the war-god, called Aula Neid, the court or palace of Ned, near the Foyle in the North. Had the ethnic civilisation of Ireland been suffered to develop according to its own laws, it is probable that, as the roofed central chamber of the cairn would have grown until it filled the space occupied by the mound, so the open-walled temple would have developed into a covered building, by the elevation of the walls, and their gradual inclination to the centre.

The bee-hive houses of the monks, the early churches, and the round towers are a development of that architecture which constructed the central chambers of the raths. In this fact lies, too, the explanation of the cyclopean style of building which characterizes our most ancient buildings. The cromlech alone, formed in very ancient times the central chamber of the cairn; it is found in the centre of the raths on Moy Tura, belonging to the stone age and that of the Firbolgs. When the cromlech fell into disuse, the arched chamber above the ashes of the hero was constructed with enormous stones, as a substitute for the majestic appearance presented by the massive slab and supporting pillars of the more ancient cromlech, and the early stone

buildings preserved the same characteristic to a certain extent.

The same sentiment which caused the mediæval Christians to disinter and enshrine the bones of their saints, and subsequently to re-enshrine them with greater art and more precious materials, caused the ethnic worshippers of heroes to erect nobler tombs over the inurned relics of those whom they revered, as the meanness of the tomb was seen to misrepresent and humiliate the sublimity of the conception. But the Christians could never have imagined their saints to have been anything but men—a fact which caused the retention and preservation of the relics. When the Gentiles exalted their hero into a god, the charred bones were forgotten or ascribed to another. The hero then became immortal in his own right; he had feasted with Mananān and eaten his life-giving food, and would not know death.

When the mortal character of the hero was forgotten, his house or temple might be erected anywhere. The great Raths of the Boyne—a place grown sacred from causes which we may not now learn—represented, probably, heroes and heroines, who died and were interred in many different parts of the country.

To recapitulate, the Dagda Mōr was a divine title given to a hero named Eocaidh, who lived many centuries before the birth of Christ, and in the depths of

the pre-historic ages. He was the mortal scion or ward of an elder god, Elathân, and was interred in some unknown grave—marked, perhaps, by a plain pillar stone, or small insignificant cairn.

The great tumulus of New Grange was the temple of the divine or supernatural period of his spiritual or imagined career after death, and was a development by steps from that small unremembered grave where once his warriors hid the inurned ashes of the hero.

What is true of one branch of the Aryan family is true of all. Sentiments of such universality and depth must have been common to all. If this be so, the Olympian Zeus himself was once some rude chieftain dwelling in Thrace or Macedonia, and his sublime temple of Doric architecture traceable to some insignificant cairn or flagged cist in Greece, or some earlier home of the Hellenic race, and his name not Zeus, but another; and Kronos, that god whom he, as a living wight, adored, and under whose protection and favour he prospered.

STANDISH O'GRADY.

11 LOWER FITZWILLIAM STREET,
DUBLIN.

HISTORY OF IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

DOWN TO THE DEATH OF CUCULAIN.—A SKETCH.

> "Within the fleeting surface of Time's river
> It trembles, but it cannot pass away."
>
> SHELLEY.

THE age of Cuculain and the Red Branch Knights of Ulster is yet so closely connected, psychologically, with the semi-historic and mythological periods, as well as historically with the immediately preceding centuries, that the reader will best sympathise with, and understand the true character of the epoch in question, by being supplied with a sketch of the bardic history down to the time of which I have undertaken to write. Those more interested in the subject will find the ages of which I here give a mere sketch, treated more fully and minutely in Keatinge—O'Mahony's edition being the best—though by no means with the fulness and minuteness which the subject requires, and which the still existing bardic literature can supply. The subjoined chronology down to the year 299 B.C. has little, if any, historical value. At the same time, its psychological importance is not slight, for the dates determine the order which,

to the early historians, seemed to characterise that huge procession of events and characters with which the forefront of our history is thronged.

I regret that I have not time or space to treat of the mythological period at length. Mythology, treated succintly, is ridiculous; treated at length and with sympathy, it may, or ought to be, sublime. Grecian mythology in Keightley is absurd, but in Hesiod, Æschylus, and Sophocles inspires awe.

B.C. 2379. At the head of the mythological period we find a woman the Queen of the earliest division of those giant races who preceded the epoch of the gods. This was Kesair, daugther of Beata, who gives her name to that remotest of the mythological cycles which I call from her the Kesairian. Of this Titanic race, one individual survived and passed, as a spiritual entity, into the serener assembly of the gods, his name Fiontann, the patron deity of learned men. He is identified with "the salmon[1] of all knowledge," who haunted Connla's sacred well, and the Boyne, and the depths of the ocean. In his divine character he dwelt in the hills above Lough Derg and in the mountains of Kerry, and devoted himself to poetry and the history of the nations of Erin. The author of the battle of Moy Leana refers to him as the source of his information concerning Conn of the Hundred Fights.

B.C. 2057. Kesair and the Kesairian giants pass

[1] "As was sung by the salmon of all knowledge, the possessor of all intelligence, and the jewel manifestly rich in all history and in all truth, namely, Fiontann the prophetic, the truly acute, and the truly intelligent."—*Battle of Moy Leana*, p. 97, O'Curry's Translation. See also Chap. xxvi., Vol. I.

away, and the giant clans of the great Partholān appear, spreading themselves over Ireland, from the Erne to Ben Edar,[1] and the estuary of the Liffey. At the source[2] of the Dodder may still be seen their tombs.

Now first appear the Fomorians,[3] battling with the Clan Partholān for the sovereignty of Erin. They, issuing from their woods and forests, contended, not successfully, with the new comers, but were annihilated in the plain of Ith. This was the first *gigantomachia.* A plague swept away this giant brood.

B.C. 1700. Nemedh and his sons, forming the Nemedian epoch. Their rule was also interrupted by the Fomorian giants. These we find at first enslaved by the Nemedians. For Nemedh they erected great fortresses; but ere long Nemedian and Fomorian meet in battle, and we seem to hear, all over Ireland, the crash of their contending hosts, the conflicts of giants in every province. Nemedh dies, and his sepulchral cairn is raised on high, crowning the lofty island that looks down on Cork Harbour; and from Tor Coning (Tory Island) in the North, Morc and his Fōmoroh rule over all Ireland, imposing servile tributes upon the children and people of Nemedh. Again, we see the subject races rise under Fergus the Red-Sided and his brothers, battles around Tor Coning, a vain struggle, ending in the final defeat and expulsion of the Nemedian race. The word Nemedh means sacred; he himself was the root whence sprang the gods of the historic age, the deities of ethnic Erin.

B.C. 1525. The return to Erin of the descendants

[1] Howth. [2] Hill of Tallaght.

[3] *Fo*, a prince; *mor*, great.

of the expulsed Nemedians, led now by the five sons of Dēla, the posterity of Starn, son of Nemedh; but behind them press on a mightier race, the posterity of Iarbanel, brother of Starn. The first of these were the Fir-bolgs, and the second the Tuátha Dē Danān. The former landing, subdue the Fomoroh, and establish themselves over the island, the Fomoroh retiring for a season.

B.C. 1510. Now, at last, come the Tuátha Dē Danān, "concealed in their dark clouds," immortal, invincible, wielders of magic power. Like the Fir-bolgs, giants, but adding to gigantic strength the power of enchantments and the might of godhood. Their leaders were the Dagda, Nuáda the Silver-Handed, son of Ecta, son of Edarlām, son of Ordan, son of Alldæi,[1] Bras, son of Elathān, Dela, son of sun-faced Ogma, son of Elathān, and with them goddesses and battle-furies, and the innumerable immortal peoples who, in after ages, peopled every glen and hill, lake and river throughout Erin. Concealed in the Fæd Fia of Mananān, the gods encamped upon Slieve[2] an Iaran, the giants, await them on the western plains, under Yeoha Mac Erc, the greatest and best of their kings—his tomb still a wonder in the time of Geraldus and the Normans. There took place the great battle of Moy Tura[3] the Lower, and there the destruction of the Fir-bolgic power, and the triumph of the gods. The Fir-bolgs were annihilated, or driven out of Erin into the northern isles; those that remained became ancestors of the

[1] See divine pedigrees, p. 73. [2] See divine pedigrees, p. 73.

[3] Near Cong, Co. Mayo. The plain is covered with sepulchral mounds.

aboriginal inhabitants whom the sons of Milesius found when they landed.[1]

But the gods had yet a more terrible enemy to deal with. The Fomorian giants, under the leadership of Balōr Ua Neid, Balōr, grandson of Ned, the old primeval war-god, descended upon the divine race, broke down their power, and reduced themselves to the direst oppression. Humbly each year the high gods of Erin brought their tributes to feed the insatiable tyranny of their monster oppressors. Resistance was impossible, for Kethlenn, the wife of Balōr, could alone rout many battalions, and Balōr of the mighty blows (Bailcmenna), even when age had impaired his strength, with his Gorgon eye, like the shield of Pallas Athéné, converted armies into stones. Ten giants it required to raise the lid, for in age, the monster became inert and comatose. The gods, degraded and dishonoured, settled down into hopeless slavery.

But a deliverer was at hand. Balōr and Kethlenn had a daughter named Æthleen, surnamed the Scál Balbh, who married Cian the Slender, son of Diancect, the physician of the gods. Their son was Lu the Long-Handed. His foster-mother was Taylta, widow of Mac Erc, the last king of the Fir-bolgs, whom he ever after tenderly loved,[2] but subsequently he was educated in Fairyland, or as some say, the Isle of Man, at the court of Mananān, the great sea-god who, in his palace reared by magic, dwelt apart from those who struggled for the material possession of Erin. When Lu Lamfáda

[1] See Chap. xvii., Vol. I.

[2] In her honour he established the great national festival and games of Taylteen, Co Westmeath.

reached manhood, he had it in his power to join his mother's people, the oppressors; or his father's, the oppressed. He joined the latter, and with arms and weapons, which no power could resist, and with his foster-brethren, the sons of Mananān, came out of Fairy-land to deliver the people of his sire. The gods deemed another sun had arisen when they beheld him afar off. He slaughtered the tax-gatherers and collectors of tribute, raised up the gods in rebellion, and on the plains of Moy Tura the Upper,[1] broke down for ever the power of the Fōmoroh, slew Kethlenn with his magic sword, darted a sling-bullet through the eye of Balōr, drove out the Fōmoroh, and set free the gods. We shall hear of him more than once in this volume. This was the god to whom the bards assigned the supernatural parentage of Cuculain. The liberated gods renewed their sovereignty over Ireland.

B.C. 1499. Landing of the sons of Milesius, king of Spain—the Clan Milith—to whom all the princely families of historic times referred back their origin. They from Spain, invaded the island,[2] and before them the gods retired to their hills and sacred places, thenceforward ruling invisibly over the mortal nations of Erin.

The Christian writers represent the gods as having been annihilated or driven to the mountains, and the shelter of their magic powers by the Clan Milith. The true ethnic history is that the Tuátha Dē Danān wel-

[1] Parish of Kilmactranny, Co. Sligo. Tombs here also.

[2] See Vol. I., Chap. xvii., xviii., and xix.; see also Keatinge and O'Curry, under the head of Heber and Heremon, Publications of Ossianic Society under Amargin.

comed them as their fit successors, and voluntarily passed from their mundane into a more spiritual existence. The Milesians were pets with the monastic historians, but the Tuátha Dē Danān evil spirits.

The following is the pedigree of the Milesians, Heber and Herēmon, Iar, Arannan, Colpa, Arech the Red-browed, Donn, Amargin, all sons of

Milith, or Milesius, King of Spain,
son of
Billé,
son of
Brōgan—[See Ith, Vol. I., cap. xvii., ancestor of the Corca Lewy and Clan O'Driscoll.]
son of
Dēga,
son of
Alloid,
son of
Nugat,
son of
Nennuall,
son of
Fœbar Glas,
son of
Heber the Black-kneed,
son of
Lam Fin,
son of
Adnamon,
son of
Tath,
son of
Oghoman,

Oghoman,
son of
Beoghaman,
son of
Sru,
son of
Esru,
son of
Gædil = unde Clanna Gædil, or the
son of Gæl.
Niul,
son of
Feniusa Farsa,
son of
Baath.

At this point the monks subjoined the Hebrew pedigrees. It will be remarked that the names Tath, Baath, Sru, Esru, and Alloid occur also in the pedigrees of the gods, Sru and Esru in both coming together, and in the same order.[1] Again, amongst Heber's sons we find four—Er, Orba, Forus and Farna; these four are also mentioned as the sons of Partholan.[2] This shows how inseparably the founders of the Milesian families were mixed up with those ancient half-forgotten gods and giants of the mythical period. The truth probably is, that there was in distant pre-historic times a Spanish invasion of the island, that the chief heroes of the various colonies, having in process of time been deified, became first merged into and intermingled, at least to a certain extent, and locally, with the native mythology,

[1] See pp. 74 and 75. [2] See Keatinge.

and subsequently, by the pressure of the classical and national mythological system, were again reduced to a merely heroic character.

Henceforward, down to the date 299 B.C., the History of Ireland consists of descending genealogical lines, and of various rolls of kings, provincial and national. The source of those name-crowded pages in our annals, it is difficult to determine. Fabrications of mediæval annalists they certainly were not, for indications of, and allusions to, those early kings are found in the heroic literature which revolves around the characters that flourished after the date 299 B.C., clearly showing that the bards who composed that literature were conscious of a region of history, and of the existence of celebrated kings, which did not relate to the adventures of the gods, and were, at the same time, prior to the age with which the heroic literature deals. From this it is clear that they were not monastic fabrications; and besides this, the intermeddling of the monks with the antique history of the country has always an easily recognisable character of its own. Those ancient lists of kings and lines of genealogy intervening between the Spanish invasion and the date 299 B.C. are either authentic successions transmitted through the agency of bardic families, and the assistance of that close and compact form of verse in which such lore was preserved, or they represent the residuum of antique and forgotten cycles of bardic literture. In either event they should be referred rather to the domain of history than mythology. As I have endeavoured to show in my Preface,[1] the residuum of a bardic literature, where no *a priori* objections exist, is sure to represent historic fact. When

[1] P. 19, *et seq.*

the "leafy luxury" is pruned away, the bare stem and branch are historic. This would not be true of romantic literature, but it is true of bardic, and the student must remember that the heroic literature of Ireland comes under the latter head, and not under the former. Now, the treatment which the scientific historian would advise for the existing Irish heroic literature has been effected by the hand of time, after a far more ruthless manner, in the heroic cycles that preceded 299 B.C., if we are to suppose that those genealogies and lists of kings are the residuum of a heroic literature, and not authentic successions transmitted in verse by the bardic families. To the rough-and-ready writer, who would dash his pen through all this period, his difficulties will arise the moment he attempts, as he is bound to do, to account for the existence of that which he would expunge. For his theory or explanation to be acceptable must harmonise with what we know to have been the characteristics and genius of the bardic mind. In the meantime, it will be advisable to accept the opinion of the great mediæval historian, Tiherna, and regard the annals, from the age of Milesius to Kimbay, as of uncertain authencity. *Omnia monumenta Scotoram ante Kimbay incerta sunt.*

If we conclude that those names represent ancient kings, powerful and celebrated in their day, and flourishing at some time prior to the third century B.C., but that the dates are arbitrary, we shall probably go as far as in the existing state of Irish scholarship we would be justified.[1]

[1] See, however, a very fine bardic poem, M. and C., Vol. III., p. 527, giving the history of the remote and comparatively unimportant fair of Cahirmān (near Wexford), where the embodiment of the local traditions and history harmonises strangely with the national annals.

From the age of Milesius, the Ard-Ries of Ireland down to Kimbay, appear in the following order:—

MILESIUS[1] OF SPAIN.

Heber and Herēmon, sons of Milesius, joint kings—war between the brothers. Death of Heber in battle of Geashill, King's County. Site of this battle, as usual, strewn with tumuli. Names and raths of Heber's chieftains mentioned in Dinnshenchus.[2]

Herēmon, sole king.

Wars between Herēmon and chieftains of the Milesians. Death of Herēmon. Interred on banks of the Nore, parish of Rathbeagh, Co. Kilkenny, in the celebrated Pagan Cemetery of Argat-Ross. Amongst many others here interred was Lewy Mac Conroi who slew Cuculain.

From Heber the princely families of Munster claimed descent; from Herēmon, those of Meath, Leinster, and Connaught, also the successors of the Red Branch in Ulster. The Red Branch drew their origin from a third brother, Iar. The Corca Lewy, once powerful in the south of Ireland, but eventually confined to the west of Cork—their tribe-name altered to O'Driscoll—claimed descent from Ith, the uncle of Milesius. Only members of these four families were eligible for the Ard-Rieship of Ireland.

Mueena, Lueena and Lainey, sons of Herēmon.

Sons of Heber.

[1] Milesius himself died before the invasion.

[2] A very ancient composition, describing all the celebrated Pagan cemeteries in Ireland.

Irial son of Herĕmon.

Ethrial son of Irial.

Conmæl.

Tihernmās. Introduced fire-worship. Enacted sumptuary laws. On Moy Slacta, the plain of the stoopings, adored a god named Crom the Stern, perhaps Cairbré Crom, one of the Tuátha Dē Danān.

Crom means thunder, Tihernmās the lord of death.

It was on this plain that St. Patrick cursed the idols which he found there. Tihernmās and his people, say the monks, were destroyed by God. I believe him to have been a topical deity.

It was his goldsmith Iuchadan, who first worked gold found in Ireland near the Liffey. Before that, the gods are represented as bringing it out of Spain.

Yeoha Edguthách, a descendant of Ith,[1] son of Brogan, grand-uncle of Milesius.

Kermna and Sovarchey. Descendants of Iar son of Milesius. Left their names on Dun Kermna, Old Head of Kinsale, and Dûn Sovarchey, now Dunseverick, near Giant's Causeway. Kelkar, son of Uther king of Dûn Sovarchey in the reign of Concobar Mac Nessa.

Yeoha Fæbar Glas.

Fiecha Lavrinna.

Yeoha Mumho. He gave its name to Munster, *i.e.*, Muman, pronounced Moon. Latin name for this province Momonia.

Angus, rich in swine.

Enna of the silver shields.

Rothecta.

Sedna.

[1] See Vol. I., p. 60.

Fiecha of the white flowers.

Minĕman.

Aldergōd.

Ollam Fodla, pronounced Ollav Fōhla, *i.e.*, the bard, judge, law-giver of Ireland. All ancient laws, whose origin was unknown, were ascribed to him; also territorial and political divisions. He stands to Ulster, of which he was hereditary king, in a relation somewhat resembling that of Theseus to Attica.

Fionachta.

Slanōll.

Geidé the Great-voiced.

Fiecha Fionailches.

Bernegāll. "It was difficult for the stalk to sustain its corn in his reign."[1]

Aileel, son of Slanōll.

Siorna, son of Dian.

Under Ollam Fodla the Ultonians seem to have acquired supremacy, and seized Tara, in Irish history often equivalent to seizing the Crown. The century and a half which the Four Masters ascribe to him, probably represents the time during which his race exercised supremacy. With Siorna the race of Ollam Fodla disappear for a space. His tomb is at Tailteen. A pamphlet was published, some time since, identifying its position in that ancient cemetery. He was a descendant of Iar, son of Milesius, and hereditary king of the Ultonians. It was, probably, about this time that the posterity of Iar conquered Ulster.

Rothecta.

[1] Four Masters. This is a conventional bardic expression, meaning that the king was just and good.

Elim.
Giallacha.
Art Imlach.
Nuada Fion-fail.
Bras.
Yeoha Apthach.
Finn.
Sedna.
Semēon Brac.
Duach Finn.
Muredac Balgrah.
Enna Derg.
Lewy Iardonn.
Siorlām.
Yeoha of the Skiffs.
Yeoha the Hunter, and Coning, joint kings.
Lewy Lam-derg.
Coning.
Art.
Fiecha Folgra.
Oileel Finn.
Yeoha.
Argetmar.
Duach Lagra.
Lewy Lagda.

Red Æd, son of Baharn, son of Argetmar, Dithorba, son of Deman, and Kimbay, son of Fiontann, joint kings.

299 B.C. KIMBAY, SOLE KING.

He founded Emain Macha, near Armagh. According to the rude great parable[1] of the bards, the war-goddess

[1] See p. 49, Vol. I.

became his bride, and with her own hands bound his enemies, and carried them to the place where she forced them to build for her and Kimbay the ramparts of the city of Emain. Though represented in the annals as the daughter of Red Æd, there is no doubt but that this was the ancient war-goddess Macha, who aided in the destruction of the giants on Moy Tura.

HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF ULSTER DOWN TO THE AGE OF CUCULAIN.

The fact that Tiherna rejected, as uncertain, the pre-Kimbayan history, and not only commences Irish history at a point so low in the ancient lists of kings, but gives accurately the date of the accession of the subsequent rulers of Ulster, and the length of their respective reigns, gives to the chronology of the kings of Emain Macha a reliability which is wanting to that of the corresponding kings of Tara except where, as occurs from time to time, he alludes to one of these latter and assigns his date.

Amongst the lost works of Tiherna was a history of the kings of Tara, commencing with the Temarian contemporary of Kimbay.

B.C. 299. KIMBAY.

Kimbay founded Emain Macha as the military capital and centre of authority for the north of Ireland. He was king of the Ulta or Ultonians, who claimed descent from Iar, son of Milesius, wrecked and drowned off Skelig Michæl, in the Atlantic. It will need the lapse of two centuries before this race, now the Ulta or children of Iar, will receive the name by which they have become so famous, the Clanna Rury, or Red Branch of

Ulster. The Ultonians seem to have conquered Ulster from the south. Tailteen, Co. Westmeath, renowned from the mythological period, was ere this the centre of their power. Henceforward, Emain Macha becomes for the north of Ireland what Tara was to the midland counties, and to a certain extent for the whole of Ireland. Kimbay is not mentioned by Tiherna as one of Ard-Ries of Ireland.

When the king of Ulster was also king of Ireland he took possession of Tara. As the kings of other countries are said to occupy the throne, so the king of Ireland occupied Tara, the visible symbol of sovereignty. His guards during that occupation were named the Pillars of Temair.[1] They secured the approaches thither, and compelled the disarmament of all who attended the great triennial festival. For the rest, they encamped over the public land,[2] and were supported by the tributes of the Provinces, being ever ready, not only to hold Tara by force for their king, but in cases of emergency to support his authority wherever dangerously threatened. When Owen Mōr, the great southern king, revolted against Conn, we read that the first step of the monarch was to hasten by forced marches out of Connaught and effect a junction with the Pillars of Temair.[3] I believe

[1] Temair is the nominative case. Teamrah, the genitive, came in process of time to be pronounced Tara. Temairian, a word I sometimes use, is formed from Temair.

[2] A large tract of country around Tara was common.

[3] See battle of Moy Leana. Ard-Rie of all Ireland must, of course, have been in a great number of instances to a certain extent titular. The occupation of Tara ensured predominance in the imagination of the country, and the honours, privileges, and tributes implied thereby, but not of necessity direct sovreignty over remote nations.

it was the immense political and military importance of this body which gave rise to the Ossianic literature. The feelings and ideas excited by this Pretorian guard who, at times, as in other countries, overshadowed and reduced the royal authority, eventually found expression in the vast semi-legendary cycle of which Goll Mac Morna, Finn Mac Cool, Ossian, Oscar, Diarmid, and Cœlté were the protagonistæ. During the centuries of the supremacy of the Hy-Neill, *i.e.*, the descendants of Neill of the Hostages, the Pretorian right became vested as a hereditary possession in four powerful military tribes.

What Tara was in the centre of Ireland, Emain Macha was in the north. The king who held it was the recognised Ard-Rie of Ulster. Authority, dignity, influence, and renown were concentrated on this spot. Kimbay is the first king of Emain Macha recognised by Tiherna. That many preceded him in that dignity is certain, for this place was celebrated in the mythological period, and is particularly alluded to in the Nemedian epoch.

The direct authority of Kimbay extended over all Ulster. In the east he erected a fortress in Island Magee, and, in the west, he succeeded, by force or election, to the power of Æd Roe, King of Ballyshannon. The legend of Macha and the sons of Dithorba points certainly to the conquest of Connaught, or a considerable portion of it, by this prince.

KINGS OF EMAIN MACHA—*Continued.*

B.C. 279. Yeoha[1] Mac Ferada.

B.C. 257. Concobar the Red.

[1] Gælice Eochaidh and Eocha.

B.C. 229. Fiecha Mac Felim.
B.C. 213. Dairé Mac Forga.
B.C. 136. Rana Mac Rōka.
B.C. 131. Fiecha Mac Fiaconn.
B.C. 119. Fioncada Mac Baiceda.

So far as I can learn—but until the Irish native literature has been given fully to the world this can matter little—there are no bardic cycles, or remains of bardic cycles, in which the preceding kings have been celebrated. Their names and the length of their reigns constitute the fasti of Emain, which was one of the great fair-grounds and a centre of assemblies for the north of Ireland, and like all the other places of this description, had its hereditary bardic family, in which was transmitted the succession of the kings who held this important place. No halo of bardic admiration surrounds them. One glances with dismay over this little antique cemetery, in which, beyond the name and patronymic, we can see not a single word to indicate what manner of man answered to each of those rugged ancient names.

Meanwhile, in other realms, that purple bardic light which here refuses utterly to shine, illuminated, after its wont, all, or nearly all, the successive victorious tenants of the Hill of Tara. Around Tara and the Temairian kings and battles this fierce bardic light never ceases to beat; and however we may regret the hyperbolés and unhistoric descriptions of persons and events which surround each king, his enemies and followers, we can find little fault as to the quantity. The fact was, that the national imagination pursued with the deepest interest the kings and heroes who fought for

or held that "centre of the assemblages of Erin," and whose wars raged principally over the middle of the island, while it naturally neglected the provincial kings. The annals of Ulster up to this point could not indeed be more dry; but just at this time events were taking place elsewhere, destined to attract to Emain Macha the attention of the whole nation, and to rivet there so strongly on the history of half a century, the imagination and interest of the whole bardic class, that no student of Irish history has ever yet risen from the perusal of the literature which revolves round the Ultonian heroes of that epoch, mangled and dishonoured as it has been, and of which, not a sixth can be said to be within reach of the ordinary reader, without a strange and indescribable emotion of interest, wonder, and even awe. The stern and unyielding Tiherna himself pauses for a moment in the midst of his iron synchronisms, to write words from which we can see that he, as well as every one else, was struck and subdued by the wonderful story of Emain Macha and its heroes, in the age of which Concobar Mac Nessa was its king, and Cuculain its foremost champion.

At this time, circa 119 B.C., there appeared in the centre and south of Ireland one of those warriors who, from time to time, with little to support them but valour and native force and intellect, cause a new departure in the history of their country, and affect for ages the progress of events. His name was Rury, surnamed Mör, or the Great, founder of the Clanna Rury, or the Red Branch of Ulster. His family history reveals none of those names previously famous in the contests for the Ard-Rieship, for his pedigree is given thus in all the

authorities, Rury Mör, son of Sidric, son of Fohmor, son of Duff. He was, therefore, not king of one of the greater military tribes. A list of his battles shows the wide extent of his warlike operations. The battle of Cuircé, now Kerricurihy, Co. Cork, of Cliu Mæl, in barony of Coshlea, Co. Limerick; Glenamna, now Glanworth, also in the Co. Cork; of Slieve Mish, near Tralee, Co. Kerry; of Burren, Co. Clare; of Ai, the plain where Queen Meave assembled her troops, near Lough Ree; of Moy Rein, Co. Leitrim; of Cuil Silinné, Co. Roscommon, and Fortrasc, not identified. Into Ulster, which was destined to be the scene of the glory of his descendants, he does not seem to have penetrated. His tomb is at the great Pagan cemetery of Arget-Ross on the Nore. The bards traced his descent from Iar, son of Milesius. Herëmon the greatest of the sons of Milesius, Rury son of Sidric, and Lewy Mac Conroi, who slew Cuculain, are the most renowned of the heroes interred in this cemetery. From Cas, son of Rury, the greatest of the Red Branch Knights were descended.

KINGS OF EMAIN MACHA—*Continued.*

B.C. 117. Concobar Mæl.

B.C. 95. Cormac Mac Laga.

About this time Congal Claireena, son of Rury the great, extended the sovereignty of the Clanna Rury over Ulster.

B.C. 79. Congal Claireena, also king of Tara.

B.C. 64. Duach Dalta Dëga, also king of Tara.

This powerful prince played a part not unlike that of Rury. He was king of a great tribal confederacy, known as the Clan Dega—Degadii in Latin writers—whose me-

tropolis was at the strong military point which we now call Ballyshannon. From the proximity of the Erne they are called also the Ernai. Duach Dalta Dĕga conquered Ulster and Mid Erin, wrested Tara from Congal Claireena, and is enrolled amongst the Ard-Ries of all Ireland. After ten years he was defeated and slain by the great Clanna Rury, under Factna, the Righteous, father of Concobar Mac Nessa. His defeat led to an event of permanent national importance. The tribes which he ruled were not only defeated and driven from Tara by the Clanna Rury, but they were exterminated out of the north of Ireland. The remnant fled into Munster, where, either by conquest or intermarriage, or more likely through the magic of their great name, they obtained the kingship of wide territories, extending along north Munster, from the west of Kerry to the borders of the kingdom of Ossory, and eventually, under Eterskel, son of Owen, son of Iar, reappeared in the wars of the midland, seized Tara and the Ard-Rieship, and slew the reigning monarch. The son of this Eterskel was Conairé Mōr, noblest and most splendid of the Ethnic kings of Tara.

B.C. 54. Factna Fathách, also king of Tara. He was son of Cas, son of Rury, and Ard-Rie of all Ireland, and by his daughter Dectĕra, grand-father of Cuculain. It was he who exterminated the Ernai or Clan Dĕga out of Ulster. By his wife Nessa, daughter of Yeoha Sulboy, he was father of Concobar Mac Nessa, king of the Clanna Rury, in the age of their greatest glory.

B.C. 48. Mocta Mac Murchod.

B.C. 45. Yeoha Mac Dary.

B.C. 42. Yeoha Sulboy.

B.C. 30. Fergus Mac Lēda.

Of this prince we have the following bardic picture, whose fierce colours do not suit our more subdued and quiet thoughts :—

"A sad hero with black tresses, his countenance ruddy and wound-inflicting. Stout his thighs, each limb not much smaller than a man's body. Hatred mixed with murder sparkled in his eyes in his lofty head. Splendid his equipment, and conspicuous the raiment, the armour, and the weapons of his warriors. And thus was he equipped, on account of his pleasant exploits as a cutter-off of multitudes, for he satiates himself in combats, and routs battalions, and gains the upper hand of his foes, so that they flee back to their own land, submitting themselves to his mercy. And it is not for reward, O son of Leda, that thou hast come down to the smooth plain of Meath."[1]

Before we blame the gigantic treatment of their history to which the bards were addicted, we must remember, that in the statue which fronts Trinity College, we have represented Grattan in twice or three times his natural stature, and that the Torso of Theseus has thighs actually thicker than a man's body. Art, in its treatment of heroes, instinctively and imperatively demands size.

B.C. 18. Concobar Mac Nessa, Fergus Mac Roy, the tanist, having been set aside. The latter is generally represented by the bards as Concobar's predecessor, but Tiherna does not acknowledge the claim. He was, probably, Protector during Concobar's boyhood.

B.C. 18. Birth of Cuculain.

[1] Tan-bo-Cooalney. O'Daly's MS. Translation, p. 322.

A.D. 9. Death of Cuculain at the hands of Erc, son of Cairbry Nia-far and Lewy Mac Conroi. The tomb of Cuculain is at Tara, identified by Mr. Petrie. That of Erc is in the neighbourhood of Tara, also identified. The following is a short history of Lewy Mac Conroi.[1]

Curoi Mac Dary was king of the Ernai or Clan Dega in Munster, and his fortress, Cathair Conroi, whose cyclopean greatness still excites the wonder of the visiter in the mountains west of Tralee. Before the Tân-bo-Cooalney, Cuculain and the Ultonians defeated the Clan Dēga, sacked this fortress, and slew Curoi Mac Dary. He subsequently took under his patronage and protection Lewy, the son of the slain king, and treated him like a son. Lewy joined Queen Meave in her last invasion of Ulster and, aided by Erc, slew his patron.

In the ancient tale in which the sack of Cathair Conroi by Cuculain is described, and also in another contained in "the feast of Bricrind," the physical features of the surrounding country and the character of the fortress itself are described exactly as they appear today. The historic bardic literature is always confined within the limits of space and time, and does not wander and spread itself abroad like the literature of romance.

Within the same termini as I have used for my sketch of the history of Ulster, I shall as shortly as possible give a corresponding account of the kings of Tara. It was at this point I commenced, in Vol. I. (see p. 49), relating the history of Ireland thence forward in a somewhat bardic fashion.

[1] Curoi, nominative; Conroi, genitive.

KINGS OF TARA.

B.C. 299. Ugainé Mōr.
B.C. 283. Lægairé Lorc.
B.C. 282. Covac Cæl-Bray.
B.C. 252. Lara, of the ships.

In his reign Leinster acquired its name, as the province of the *Laighean* (pronounced smooth), a new description of broad-bladed spear, introduced by his Gaulish mercenaries, and popularised in that part of Ireland.

B.C. 240. Meilgé Molpthach.
B.C. 236. Moh Corb.
B.C. 230. Angus Ollam.
B.C. 225. Irereo.
B.C. 223. Fer-Corb.
B.C. 216. Connla Cæm.
B.C. 204. Oileel Caisfiechla.
B.C. 189. Adamar.
B.C. 187. Yeoha Ailtlâhan.
B.C. 176. Fergus Fōrthâmil.
B.C. 169. Angus Tuirmech.
B.C. 129. Conaill Callamrah.
B.C. 127. Nia Seghamain.
B.C. 117. Enna, the Hospitable.
B.C. 116. Crimthann, the Warlike.

In his reign Rury the Great, founder of the Clann Rury, rose into predominance, slew Crimthann, seized Tara, and established a new dynasty which, for three generations, with varying fortune held, or contended for the Ard-Rieship of Erin, and, after securing the hegemony

of Ulster, from Emain Macha ruled over all the Ultonians, and at times secured Tara and the Ard-Rieship. In the middle of the fourth century, the descendants of Rury were driven from Emain Macha across the Righe, but in the territory between that river and the sea, named Ulidia by Latin writers, this noble race maintained themselves until they were conquered by the great De Courcy and his Normans.

B.C. 112. Rury Mōr.
B.C. 98. Innatmār.
B.C. 95. Brasal, son of Rury.
B.C. 84. Lewy Luainey.
B.C. 79. Congal Claireena, son of Rury.
B.C. 64. Duach Dalta Dēga.

With him rise into national importance the celebrated tribe of the Ernai or Degadii. From the north-west of the island they break out into the midland counties, seize Tara, and proclaim their king Ard-Rie of Ireland. That Dēga, from whom the clan derives its name, was earlier by a few generations.

B.C. 54. Factna Fathách, *i.e.*, the Righteous, son of Cas, son of Rury.

Under him the Clanna Rury revolt against the Ernai. Factna defeats and slays Duach Dalta Dēga, and exterminates the Clan Dēga out of the north of Ireland. Factna Fathách proclaimed Ard-Rie. By his wife Nessa he was father of Concobar Mac Nessa, and by his daughter Dectēra grand-father of Cuculain.

B.C. 38. Yeoha Airēm.[1]

[1] The story related in Chap. xxi., Vol. I., should have been told of him and not of his brother. Arguing from some untrustworthy indications, I identified him with his brother, the succeeding monarch.

He first introduced the custom of burying the dead. He was slain at the Hill of Fremain, near the plain in which was fought the great battle between Queen Meave and the Ultonians, described in this volume. Sigmall, chief of the Fera-Cûl, a tribe settled in that region, was his slayer. His daughter Essa was wife of Cormac Conlíngas, one of the great Ultonian heroes.

B.C. 23. Yeoha, the Melancholy.

By his wife Cruhane, whence Rath Cruhane, he was father of Queen Meave, and by one of his three rebellious sons, grand-father of Lewy Rievenerg, raised to the Ard-Rieship by Cuculain and the Ultonians.

B.C. 18. Birth of Cuculain in the reign of this king.

B.C. 11. Eterskel, son of Owen, son of Iar.

Under him resurgence of the Clan Dēga who, having reduced Munster, reappeared in national politics, and in the wars and struggles of the midland counties. They sieze Tara and proclaim Eterskel, Ard-Rie.

B.C. 7. Death of Eterskel at the hands of the descendants of that Crimthann whom Rury Mōr drove out of Tara. The king of this nation seizes Tāra, his name, Nuáda Nect, son of Sedna, a descendant of Crimthann, the Warlike. This nation came out of Leinster. After a few months, Nuáda Nect was driven from Tara by the Clan Dēga.

B.C. 7. Continued predominance of the Clan Dēga. Conairé Mōr, the Beautiful, son of Eterskel, slays Nuáda Nect, and seizes the Ard-Rieship. According to the bards no one superior to him in personal beauty had appeared in Erin before his time, except only the god, Angus. His reign was peaceful and prosperous. To use the bardic phraseology and ideas—"There was no wet or

tempestuous weather in Ireland; with difficulty the trees were able to support the abundance of their fruit, and the sea annually cast up her secret treasures on the strand at Inver Colpa."

Concobar Mac Nessa was king of the Ultonians at this time, and gave to the Ard-Rie, as hostages, his son Cormac Conlíngas, also Conaill Carna, the Red Branch Champion.

B.C. 3. Death of Conairé Mōr. Surprised at midnight in the palace of Da Derga, on the banks of the Dodder, by the sons of Aileel and Meave, the sons of Donn Dēsa and Cambrian pirates. Interregnum of six years ensues, filled with wars of Queen Meave and the Ultonians, Ultonians and the Clan Humōr, Ultonians and the Clan Dēga, Ultonians and the tribes of Meath under Cairbré Nia-far, Ultonians and nations of Leinster under Finn, the Poetic. These six years constitute the floruit of Cuculain. Before he died he raised Lewy Rievenerg, son of one of the three Finns[1] of Emain, sons of Yeoha, the Melancholy, to the Ard-Rieship.

A.D. 9. Death of Cuculain. His father was Sualtam, son of Folt-Mōr, son of Folt-Beg, an undistinguished ancestry; his mother Dectēra, daughter of Factna, the Righteous, son of Cas, son of Rury, founder of the Clanna Rury or Red Branch; his nurse Dethcæn, daughter of Cathvah, the Druid. From his friend Conaill Carna descended the Hy-Conaill of Murthemney,[2] conquered and suppressed by De Courcy and the Normans; also the ruling families of Leix,[3] in mediæval

[1] Bras, Nar, and Lōthar. [2] Co. Louth.
[3] King's County and Queen's County.

history represented by the O'Moores. Of the warriors of the Red Branch he alone seems to have left a posterity distinguished amongst the regnant families of later times. From his son Euryal Glun-mar descended the Hy-Conaill of Louth, from his son Leix Land-Mŏr the ruling tribes of Leix. Euryal Glun-mar was also king of Emain Macha.

Cuculain's foster-father was Concobar Mac Nessa; his birth-place, Dûn-Dalgan, near Dundalk, his boyhood and youth, spent at Emain Macha under his uncle. His first instructor in arms, Fergus Mac Roy, and after his defeat and expulsion, Lægairé, son of Cónud, son of Iliach, and Conaill Carna, son of Amargin, son of Cas, son of Rury, both of whom, though contemporaries, he eclipsed in war. His wife, Emer, daughter of Forgal Mánach, king of Lusk, Co. Dublin. He fought battles in every province of Erin, also in Scotland (Alba), where even then the Scōti, (Irish) were establishing themselves against the Picts (Cruaithneen).

In reading his history, allowance must be made for the bardic tendency to ascribe to the chief all that the prowess of his warriors under his guidance might achieve. Holding the frontier territories of Ulster, the brunt of all invasions and border warfare would naturally fall upon him and his nation. His greatest achievements were the successful and protracted resistance which he, or his local levies, offered to the armies of Queen Meave, and described in bardic fashion in Vol. I., his heroism in the battle of Gaura, described in the present volume, the conquest of Curoi Mac Dary, king of north Munster, the battle of Sid Femen, on the southern side of the Galtee range, where he overthrew the kings

of Munster, the battle of Ros-na-ree where he defeated and slew Cairbrè Nia-fàr, king of Meath, the father of Erc, the battle of Fioncabra, where he overthrew the chivalry of north Leinster, under Finn, son of Rossa Roe, son of Fergus Fairgè, and the battle of Rath Cruhane, where he defeated the Clan Humōr. He had two children, Connla and Fionscōta, neither of whom left descendants, a proof of the jealous care with which the bards guarded his family history, for a desire to trace descent from him must have been very strong in every regnant or military clan. His great fame appears to have arisen from a combination of personal qualities and the accident of circumstances. His warlike prowess seems to have been combined with a character and temperament peculiarly fascinating and attractive, and his early death impressed a tragic element upon his career which could not fail to affect strongly the imagination of the age. The sun of his glory sets at noon in clouds of suffering. But beyond this, he was the greatest and most renowned of a family upon whose history and achievements the bardic class consecrated an attention more intense, and an admiration more deep, than were attracted by any of the other great ruling families of that, or the preceding ages. Why some ages and kings stir profoundly the imagination of the world, and others hardly inferior, not at all, is difficult to determine. Charlemain and his peers are the centre of a romantic literature, while the great story of William the Conqueror and his Normans has been left altogether to the chroniclers.

He was slain about two miles from Dundalk, near a small lake called Loch-an-cládav, the lake of the sword,

by an invading army, raised suddenly out of the north of Munster, out of Connaught, and north Leinster. That Erc and Lewy Mac Conroi slew him with their own hands is, of course, possible, but that they commanded in the army which finally overthrew him, is certain.

His tomb is at Tara. There is a knoll in the centre, surrounded by a triple circumvallation of earthen walls, technically termed a *tre-duma*, or triple tomb, the most honourable form of Pagan interment.[1]

Those who have read the narrative portions of these volumes will, I am sure, find this sketch an useful addition to the story which, they might otherwise refer to a different order of romantic composition from that to which it really belongs. It is, in fact, history *seen* and not merely recorded, which I have written, using the annals and the laws, and also the memories of those trained transmitters of tradition who lived between the first and fifth centuries of the Christian era. The characters, the chief events, the successions, genealogies, customs, laws, social usages, &c., are historical; the impressions produced by the characters, the minor events, the descriptions, the local incidents, were inherited from the age in question by minds conservative and retentive beyond anything we can in these days imagine; the marvellous, the weird, the sublime represent the feelings of the minds through which that history in those centuries passed.

A mass of varied literature has been laid under contribution for the material of these volumes. I am well

[1] See Petrie's "Essay on the Antiquities of Tara," *Transactions of Royal Irish Academy*, Vol. XVIII., p. 152.

aware of my deficiencies, and I will say the deficiencies of any single mind at the present day, to grapple with the vast and profound subject which these volumes purport to embrace. But in the absence of infallible and clear-seeing guides, the short-sighted may not unfairly presume to lead the altogether blind. I shall, at all events, have done something to reduce that blank, sheer wall of ignorance, apathy, and prejudice which stands between Irishmen and their birth-right—the history of the land in which they are born, and of the ancestors from whom they have sprung, and to lessen their all but invincible repugnance to believe themselves members of the ancient nation to which we have the honour to belong.

I now return to that point at which I broke off in the First Volume.

CHAPTER II.

AN ANCIENT BANQUET.

"The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not."

SHELLEY.

WHEN the sun rose over Fremain[1] on the second day of the month of Belthinné,[2] his light was reflected only in the innumerable drops of glistening dew, with which, all over, the immense plain was begemmed, and a happy silence reigned, save only for the songs of birds in the early morn, and the cries of pastoral men who kept

[1] Fremain, now the Hill of Frewin, near Mullingar. Here Meave's army was overtaken by the Red Branch, and the Battle of Gaura fought, see "Children of Turann." See also MS. Materials of Irish History by O'Curry, p. 286. This work will for shortness be henceforward referred to as "MS. Materials."

[2] May.

watch over their roaming herds; and from the plain a thin, soft, fairy mist went up, the breath of the vernal and dewy earth. For this plain, like the plain of Tara and the Curragh of the Liffey, was sacred and untilled from of yore, since within it Uta[1] the Prosperous had been interred, whose charred bones and much-lamented ashes there inurned in their house of unhewn, massive rocks, reposed in the hollow of a mighty cairn, concealing the sad relics of the hero. Green-sided and smooth was this cairn, a grassy and flower-adorned hill, and upon its summit there grew a great elm-tree.

Therefore was the plain sacred and untilled, unfurrowed by the plough of any husbandman, nor darkened by his industrious spade. No farmer gathered there corcur or glaisin or rue,[2] nor reaped his flaxen harvest; but the immense plain lay, from age to age, a pure and undesecrated soil, and there pious meeting were held around the grave of Uta by his people, and there rude parliaments of the princes of the Clan Uta, and there warlike congregations.

When the moon rose over Fremain on the night of the second day of the month of Belthinné, her beams were reflected from the burnished points of innumerable spears, the bright faces of shields, and the ornamented handles of swords, and illuminated a hundred embroidered banners, that floated[3] over the tent-doors of

[1] Tân-bo-Cooalney, O'Daly's MS. Translation, Royal Irish Academy, p. 352. This work will henceforward referred to as T. B. C.

[2] [illegible] used in dyeing, yielding respectively scarlet, blue, bright yellow. See "Manners and Customs," Vol. I., p. 400.

[3] For use of banners, see Publications of Ossianic Society, Vol. I., pp. 40 and 127; also, Vol. II., p. 137. These works will be referred to as Pub. Oss. So. I have met allusions to this custom in the heroic literature, but cannot recall the passages.

the kings of the four provinces of Eiré. And a mighty din, a vast confused uproar, resounded where camped the great host of the men of Meave, returning from the desolation of Ulla ;[1] even the neighing of war-steeds, the lowing of herds driven away from their dear offspring and northern pastures, and the bleating of countless sheep, the scouring of the armour of warriors, the washing of chariots, and the noise of files, the sound of the harp and the cuislenna,[2] the voices of bards and the reciters of tales, and the loud laughter of those who jested and caroused; and from a thousand fires ascended sparks and pillars of dark smoke into the night. For at noon that day reached thither the vast army of the Tân, even the rising-out of the four great provinces of Erin,[3] and there they had pitched their camps, according to their septs and nations, with broad streets and squares and market-places; and for the kings and princes and nobles of Erin, their artificers had constructed swiftly booths of timber, with the stems of trees set on end in the earth, interlaced with lissom twigs and branches. And now, throughout the vast host, the warriors were cooking supper; and many a Fenian oven[4] was that night made, and many a broad-fronted bullock fell before the brazen axe, while the distributers of ale passed to and fro from cluster to valiant cluster.

So throughout the immense camp were employed the

[1] Ulster.

[2] A sort of pipe. Cuisig=a reed.

[3] Accusative case of Eiré gen Eirin. Eiré, an ancient goddess, who gave her name to the island, being the wife of Mac Cuill, grandson of the Dagda, surnamed Oll Athair, the Mighty Father.

[4] Made with red-hot stones, see Keating's description of the hunting expeditions of the Fianna Eireen.

rest of the men of Meave; but the captains of territories and the kings and chief warriors, having been bidden to feast with the great queen, assembled without the royal pavilion, waiting until what time the thrice-blown trumpet should sound. They having come from far from the ends of the camp with their attendants, along the resounding streets and ways, stood together conversing, and their armour-bearers stood apart, bearing each man his master's white banqueting shield.

There was the exiled might of Fergus Mac Roy, who, under Meave, ruled all the host of Tân, a shape gigantic of heroic mould, holding a joyless majesty and a spirit in ruins. There his heroic sons, Corc and Ciar and Conmac, the residue of five; stems they, whence sprang many a warlike branch.[1] There Cormac, surnamed Conlingas, the expulsed son of Concobar, now great amongst the Olnemacta. There Cormac Dûvlingas, his fellow-exile, and Dûvac, Dœl Ulla, the Chaffer[2] of the Ultonians and other illustrious knights—captains amongst the exiles—warlike blossoms of the Red Branch. There Aileel Finn, king of the Gamanradians, once plundered and coerced by Fergus,[3] and with him brave warriors from the Suc; and there, too, Fleeas,[4] surnamed of the Golden Locks, his martial spouse, a warrioress and seer, for Queen Meave loved war and agriculture, but Fleeas loved poetry and war. There Ed-cu Rond, and

[1] Illân the fair and Bewney, the Ruthless-Red, slain ere this. *Vide* "Death of Sons of Usna;" also, Vol. I., chap. xxv.

[2] See chap. ix.

[3] See "Tan-bo-Fleeas," and Sullivan and O'Curry's Manners and Customs, Vol. III., p. 338. This work will be referred to as "M. and C."

[4] Contrast p. 26, T. B. C., with pp. 1 and 2.

with him great champions of the Fir-Bolgic nations, honoured now more than formerly by the princes of the Clan Milith; amongst them, conversing hard by the entrance on the right, stood Mainey Ahremail,[1] son of Aileel and Meave. There the gigantic sons of Maga[2] of Moyrisk; and amongst them, having not yet proved his irresistible strength, Cet; and there the sons of Aileel and Meave, the five Maineys, not together, for they went to and fro, giving a welcome to the chiefs. There, too, Yeoha[3] Mac Luchta, the scarlet-bratta'ed monarch of North Munster, and with him a noble striping, the son of Curoi Mac Dary, Lewy, not yet surnamed, but destined to perform one great deed, and afterwards to perish, and find a dishonourable grave, his blasted glory burns dim amongst the pure shining stars of the chivalry of the Gæl,[4] and he stood silent beside the great son of Luchta Lam-Finn.[5] There, too, amongst Momonian chiefs, stood the three beautiful sons of Conairy, the son of Eterskel,[6] conspicuously handsome, princes of the Clan Dega, and with them Cathīr, son of Eterskel, their uncle.[7] There the Three

[1] Ahremail = attached to his father. For this character, see Vol. I., p. 215. Called there by his other surname, Lamgarf, "the rough-handed." He succeeded his father in the sovereignty, but was rebelled against by the sons of Maga and the Clan Humōr—see *post*, the Clan Humōr—and was slain by Senbus, see Ogygia.

[2] A warlike termagant, who preceded the floruit of Queen Meave.

[3] Yeoha, son of Luchta Lam-finn. His palace on the Connaught shore of Lough Derg. Renowned for hospitality.—"Manuscript Materials," p. 267.

[4] See Vol. I., p. 214. We shall meet him again.

[5] "Of the beautiful hands."

[6] See Vol. I., p. 104, an extract from the "Bruidin Da Derga," translated by Crowe.—Crowe MSS.

[7] See Preface.

Red Heads, immense and fierce champions out of Leinster, destined to great but dubious renown on that day, when pursuing across the Shannon, they quenched the second light of chivalry amongst the Red Branch. From them the princes of the Clan Dega averted their eyes, for there was peace between them, but not love.[1] There also was Caibdeen Mac Lon-Cras, whose warlike sire roamed his own palace at home, afflicted with a fell disease, and he sent forth his valiant son to the Tàu; nor did he receive him returning, for he fell, smitten by an invincible hand. There, too, Concobar Abratroe,[2] out of Leinster, and with him the chiefs of the Lagenian nations; and there Cailitin and his sons, wielders of magic power, who boasted, and all men believed, threatened, and all men feared, nevertheless they avoided Fergus Mac Roy, for they, who lorded it over all else, quailed before the great exile. And many more were there, illustrious heroes of the Tân, champions of Queen Meave, renowned in chronicle and song. Then sounded from within the first blast of the trumpet,[3] and the armour-bearers entered the pavilion, whose sylvan walls and roof, rough with leaves and boughs, waxen tapers illuminated, tall as a warrior's spear, not permitted in the houses of the nobles, and the many tables shone with the instruments of festivity—vessels of glass and brass, silver and gold. Afar, at the northern extremity of the vast chamber, curtained with a canopy of silver, sat the High King of the Olnemacta Aileel

[1] They were concerned in the slaughter of Conairy Mör.—MS. Materials, p. 483.

[2] Concobar of the Red Mantle. He was son of Finn, one of the great princes of Leinster. See Preface.

[3] For what follows, Keatinge is the authority.

Mŏr, son of Rossa Roe, son of Fergus Fairgé, holding[1] in his aged right-hand a silver staff, and beside him sat the great Queen. Upon the severed stems of branches, and brazen nails driven hastily into the trees, the armour-bearers hanged the shields of their masters and their spears, obeying the voice of the wise seneschal, awarding to every king, and warrior, and captain of territory his place, so that the walls shone anew with the white shields and their painted warlike symbols, and with the spear-heads of shining brass.

A second time the trumpet sounded, and from without, between the armed men who kept the door, but surpassing them by the head and shoulders as they came, entered in the mighty captains of the Tân—giants of the elder time, godlike heroes, and founders of nations and warlike tribes, kings and captains, and fearless champions, the foremost of the chivalry of Erin, long-haired warriors, stately, broad-breasted, having noble eyes. Upon each breast glittered a brooch of gold or silver, or of burnished brass, confining their brattas of silk or fine cloth, purple, or green, or crimson, or of diverse hues. So they entered the pavilion to the hospitable music of the harpers of the king, and sat them down, each champion beneath his own shield, by the wall. High-raised, at the northern extremity of the pavilion, sat the royal pair; and high-raised, at the southern extremity, facing the Ard-Rie, sat Fergus Mac Roy, occupying the Champion's Throne,[2] that next in honour to the King's.

[1] This Fergus, surnamed "of the rings," was son of Nuada Nect, king of Ireland, and slain by Conairey Mor.

[2] See Feast of Bricrind, Crowe MSS.

A third time the trumpet sounded, and there poured in the retinues, and the armour-bearers entering a second time, warriors of lesser note, and the captains of the household troops of Aileel, and they sat at the lower tables, those nearer to the roof-tree. To them, in like manner, the seneschal and his servants divided the order of their sitting, and no man disputed his award.

There, then, the great warriors of the Tân feasted, rejoicing in themselves and their matchless Queen. But when they had made an end of eating, the slaves removed the remnant of the banquet and the instruments of the first feast, and went round again distributing abundantly the ruddy, exhilarating ale, and all turned their attention anew to drinking and conversation, all except Fergus, upon whom was the care of the whole host; but he sat glooming, like a great rock in the glittering noontide sea, while he, in a low voice, conversed with Concobar, the Red-mantled, a great prince of the Lagenians, for he debated with him how Finn, the poetic, son of Rossa Roe, might be withdrawn from his neutrality, which thing indeed was afterwards accomplished, when Finn warred upon the Ultonians, not victoriously, for he perished, being smitten by an invincible hand. So they drank and conversed, but after a space, Aileel smote with his staff the canopy above his head, and the silver[1] canopy vibrating, sent forth a ringing, gong-like sound, stilling the voices of the heroes, so that no sound was heard save the confused hum of the great camp of the Tân. Straightway, from the lower table, arose a stripling, having a bardic fillet[2] around

[1] M. and C., Vol. I., p. 345 *et seq.* [2] M. and C., Vol. III., p. 783.

his temples, and he, crossing to the right side of the pavilion, at the upper end, hard by where the High Queen sat, removed from the wall a harp and its sheath, and presented it, kneeling, to Bricné, the son of Cairbré, Ard-ollav of the Olnemacta; for the High Queen sat upon the right hand of Aileel, and Bricné sat next her, removed by the length of a warrior's spear.[1] Then the sacred bard drew from its sheath,[2] made of the grey fell of badgers, lined with soft white doeskin, the gold-adorned harp, which had delighted the minds of warriors at many a great feast of the Olnemacta, and removing from them the linen wrappings which preserved them, he tuned the sweetly-sounding strings. Anon, beneath his swift and eager hands, there arose a storm of sweet sounds, taking captive the souls of those who listened; but as a thunder shower dies away in heavy single drops, so subsided that great prelude, note by sweet dissolving note, and the bard's voice arose singing.

[1] I cannot recall the passage in which this curious custom is alluded to.

[2] M. and C., Vol. III., p. 220.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE TÂN THUS FAR.

"A hand scattering wealth,
And a light not to be extinguished,
Namely, Cuculain Mac Sualtam,
The eagle of armies and of youth.

"Agile is he in his boundings,
And swift as the stormy wind;
As swift as is my gentle, faithful hound
In its noblest contest of speed."[1]

Ancient Bard.

His song was of the history of the Tân thus far, each verse musical with rhymes[2] and the charm of measured rythmic speech, not carelessly improvised with chance words and the random inspiration of the hour, after the manner of many lewd wandering minstrels, but the perfect fruit of solitary labour and much thought, that it might be worthy of the great theme, and worthy of the bards of the Olnemacta before the ollavs and singing-men of the far-coming kings, and as their race is not willingly pleased, and also that it might be an enduring monument, to live through many generations

[1] The many spots over Ireland connected with the history of Cuculain, show how profoundly his character and career affected the mind of the whole nation. The lines quoted will be found, T. B. C., pp. 33 and 34.

[2] Rhymes and alliterations mark even the most ancient Irish verse. It has been supposed that rhymed poetry was introduced from Ireland to the Continent; but it was certainly a native growth here.

in the remembrance of his successors, even the history of the invasion of Ulster by Queen Meave.

Of the causes of the war, first he sang of the great prowess of the Red Branch, and their haughtiness; of the pitiless exactions of Athairney, and the death of Mesgæra,[1] and of the pride and magnificence of the great northern monarch.

Of the Donn Cooalney[2] next, his attributes, and privileges, and beauty; of the great insult to Fergus Mac Roy; of the far-sent summons of the queen, and the gathering of the chivalry of Erin to the four plains of Ai.

The enumeration of the host then, commencing with the far-summoned kings, those who dwelt by the great southern sea, and those whose Dûns looked out on the Muirnict, concluding with the Olnemacta,[3] and the guards and household troops of Aileel, all the nations, septs, and warlike clans who, from far and near, had come together to the great hosting, awarding to each its customary honour.

Of the marches of the host of the Tân next, from the

[1] Athairney, an Ultonian poet, who, relying on the influence and support of Concobar Mac Nessa, traversed Erin, behaving arrogantly to southern chieftains, who feared to offend the Ultonians. Mesgæra at last drove him across the Liffey, out of North Leinster, but was defeated and slain by Conaill Carna (Konal Karna in Vol. I.) the great Ulster hero. His tomb is at Ford of Clæn, near Naas. Athairney was probably a judge and collector of tributes. The offices of brehon and bard were not then separate.

[2] See T. B. C., pp. 10 and 100; also Vol. I., p. 131.

[3] Muir-n-Ict, the Ictian sea between Erin and Britain. Olnemacta, the name of Connaught at this time, the princely families being descendants of an ancient conqueror, Oll Negma, the mighty Negma. The affix *acta* means posterity. Connaught, the country of the Conn-Acta, means descendants of Conn, *i.e.*, Conn of the Hundred Fights, king of Ireland, A.D. 123.

day upon which they evacuated the four plains, moving eastward; how they crossed the Shannon, at the Ford of the son of Lewy, and went over the Boar's Bridge, and passed by the tomb of the Plain of Nama, hard by Tubber Tulsk, and how they traversed successively the long level country in the midst of Erin, Tullach Teora Crioch, and the wood of the fairies, Ocbart and Fair-Glen, and the rugged ground of Gort Slaney, the two Teffias, Carn Ailé and Deltā.[1]

Of Cuculain[2] then he sang, and the nocturnal slaughter of the men of Meave; of the compact and the bloody fights on the shores of the Avon Dia, and of Fardia, son of Daman, son of Dary; of the meeting of the friends, and their giant strife, and of Cuculain perishing alone in the immense forest, somewhere between Fochainé and the sea; but as he sang there was a sound of sobbing voices in the immense chamber, where wept the friends of Cuculain—his foster-brothers and school-fellows; but Fergus Mac Roy wept not, but sat erect in the champion's throne, staring out before him, with eyes of iron.

Of the battles of Murthemney then; of the defeat of brave old Iliach, and the dispersion of his peasants and artizans; of the fierce attack of Cethern, and his flight, and how they routed Fintann and his northern warriors, and Meann Mac Salcōgan; of the desertion of Rōka Mac Athemain, and of that sad civil strife on "the plain of the troops of Fionavar," and the death of the gentle, good princess.[3]

[1] T. B. C., pp. 20 and 21. [2] See Vol. I.

[3] T. B. C., *circa* p. 280. A civil war broke out in Meave's host when in Ulster, Fionavar (for whom see p. 217, Vol. I.) having preferred Rōka Mac Athemain to her other suitors. Fionavar died in consequence, and gave her name to a plain in Murthemney, *i.e.*, Co. Louth.

Of the desolation of the Plains of Ulla last, when, far and wide, the plunderers of the Tân traversed the rich domain of the Clanna Rury; of the unaccepted challenges at the gates of Ultonian strongholds, and the dishonour of the champions of the Crave Rue, till then deemed invincible, even Concobar Mac Nessa and his heroes of the Red Branch, the terror of all Erin, erst like gods beholden upon the far northern horizon, and aloud the son of Cairbré chanted their shame, and the warlike star of Emain Macha[1] blasted in a foul eclipse.

So sang the mighty bard of the Olnemacta, chanting thus far the history of the Tân; but the warriors lifted up their voices and shouted, for their hearts were elated by that noble strain, so that their shout was heard to the ends of the camp, and heard, too, by the sentinels who, far out upon the plain, kept watch, sitting each man armed in his chariot upon the white moon-lit plain, so loud shouted the kings and captains of the Tân around the son of Cairbré, and at the lower tables the bardic students gathered around the pupils of the Ard-ollav, eager to learn from them the words of the noble chaunt.

Yet, not were all pleased, for the great Queen herself, enraged at the praise of Cuculain, directed against the bard scornful glances, and bitter arrows of sharp speech, capricious and fickle, who formerly caressed and honoured the son of Sualtam, living, but now desired to minish and stain his glory, being dead, and to gather to herself and her nation all the renown attending that great foray. Therefore she chid him with envenomed words, upbraiding his paltry verse, and in her folly,

[1] Armagh. The remains of Emain Macha are to the west of the present city.

taunted the sacred bard in that he had contributed naught to the martial conduct of the foray, and she charged him that he meditated flight[1] to the song-loving monarch of Emain, and had made a pact with the Ultonians for a great reward. But her the Ard-ollav answered in words simple and loyal, not through fear, but obeying the ancient law[2] which enjoined the language of moderation and reverence upon his order, even "purity of mouth without poisonous satire." Therefore, the great Queen abashed was silent, inwardly fretting at the great glory of the son of Sualtam.

CHAPTER IV.

CUCULAIN AND EMER.

"Love out of his cradle leaped,
And clove dun chaos with his wings of gold."

SHELLEY.

IT was at this time that Fergus Mac Roy rose from the champion's throne, like some vast rock left bare by the down-sinking billow, when after a tempest the great waters along the western shore rise and fall. So seemed the mighty captain of the Tân as he arose, and the assembly was silent until he left the pavilion, and after that many of the younger knights demanded that Bailey[3] Mac Buan should sing. An Ultonian, captive he, and doomed ere long to a sorrowful death. Dear was he

[1] Some time after this a persecution was raised against the bards, who, by their insistance upon law as opposed to force, were the democratic element in the various states. The exiled bards were received at the Court of Concobar.

[2] For full verse, see p. 44. It is quoted by O'Curry.

[3] The sad story of this very interesting character is related in O'Curry's MS. materials, p. 474.

to the women of Ulla, but he loved a maiden not of his own province, and thus sang the son of Buan to the accompaniment of his small tympan :—

CUCULAIN :

" Come down, O daughter of Forgal Mánah,
Sweet Emer, come down without fear,
The moon has arisen to light us on our way,
Come down from thy greenan without fear."

EMER :

" Who is this that beneath my chamber window
Sends up to me his words through the dim night ?
Who art thou standing in the beechen shadows,
White-browed, and tall, with thy golden hair ?"

CUCULAIN :

" It is I, Setanta, O gentle Emer !
I, thy lover, come to seek thee from the north ;
It is I who stand in the beechen shadows,
Sending up my heart in words through the dim night."

EMER :

" I fear my proud father, O Setanta,
My brothers, and my kinsmen, and the guards,
Ere I come unto thy hands, O my lover !
Through their well-lit feasting chamber I must pass."

CUCULAIN :

" Fear not the guards, O noble Emer !
Fear not thy brothers, or thy sire,
Dull with ale are they all, and pressed with slumber,
And the lights extinguished in the hall."

EMER:

"I fear the fierce watch-dogs, O Setanta
The deep water of the moat how shall I cross?
Not alone for myself, I fear, Setanta,
They will rend thee without ruth, Cuculain."

CUCULAIN:

"The dogs are my comrades and my namesakes;
Like my Luath, they are friendly unto me,
O'er the foss I will bear thee in my arms—
I will leap across the foss, my love, with thee."

EMER:

"Far and wide all the tribes and the nations
Over Bregia,[1] northwards to Dun-Lir,
They are kin to my father and his subjects—
For thy life I fear, O noble Cuculain.

CUCULAIN:

"On the lawn within the beechen shadows
Is my chariot light and strong, bright with gold;
And steeds like the March-wind in their swiftness
Will bear thee to Dûndalgan ere the dawn."

EMER:

"I grieve to leave my father, O Setanta,
Mild to me, though his nature be not mild;
I grieve to leave my native land, Setanta,
Lusk with its streams and fairy glades.

[1] The country between the Liffey and the Boyne.

"I grieve to leave my Dûn, O Setanta,
And this lawn, and the trees I know so well,
And this, my tiny chamber looking eastward,
Where love found me unknowing of his power.

"Well I know the great wrong I do my father,
But thus, even thus I fly with thee;
As the sea draws down the little Tolka,
So thou, O Cuculain, drawest me.

"Like a god descending from the mountains,
So hast thou descended upon me.
I would die to save thy life, O Setanta,
I would die if thou caredst not for me."[1]

Then was Meave grievously enraged, hearing a second time chaunted the praises of the son of Sualtam; but she dissembled her wrath, and thus addressed the noble wife of Aileel Finn with crafty words:—

"O noble Fleeas, surely this is an impious thing and not seemly, that the bards should thus hymn perpetually the name of that beardless youth, who perished but as it were to-day, and leave unsung the mighty heroes of old time—the children of Partholān and Dēla, or the sons of Milith of Espân. This indeed I would much prefer; but if we must needs sing the prowess of our foes, I myself would desire to hear, fitly chaunted, the brave deeds of Cethern Mac Fiontānn, who singly assaulted the host of the Tân. But truly thy bards alone can adequately sing the praises of heroic men."

[1] The courtship of Emer and Cuculain forms a celebrated tale in the Leabar na Huidhre.

Now Meave had herself contended with the great northern warrior, and had wounded him in the battle, whom indeed she had first insulted, for the dazed hero had come naked, hastening to the relief of Cuculain, and the great Queen, unqueenly, had diverted herself with his state, uttering jests among her captains. But in her crafty mind she deemed now that much praise would be given to her by that bard who should chaunt the brave deeds of the heroic champion of Dûn Cin-Eich.[1]

CHAPTER V.

THE CONTEST FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

"O thou who plumed with strong desire
Wouldst float above the world, beware,
A shadow tracks thy flight of fire—
Night is coming."

SHELLEY.

THEN Fleeas desired the chief bard of her territory to chaunt upon this theme, for he sat one place removed upon the right-hand side of Aileel Finn; but he, perceiving the wiles of Meave, and being, moreover, self-willed and ungovernable—for in the days of Meave the bards with difficulty brooked the commands of kings—made as though he heard only her desire that he should sing, and recurred again to the theme, detested indeed by Meave, but grateful to many of the knights, and most so to the bardic class, and he sung the contest of Cuculain for the championship of Ulla.[2]

[1] For this champion see Vol. I. p. 262. His father's fortress was Dun-da-Bann. It was Nemedh and his Fomorian slaves who first reared Dun Cin-Eich. See also T. B. C. 278.

[2] See "Feast of Bricrind," Crowe MSS.

CUCULAIN RAISED TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

"What thunder of the hoofs of horses is this?
What rolling of the wheels of chariots?
Who are these mighty men that come through the defile
To thy still, gleaming lake, O son of Imomain?

"What magic rites of these, what songs of druids
Rending thy Fæd-Fia,[1] Mananān?
Who are these that fear not the face of Uath,
Thy terrible face, O Uath of the Lake?

"Lægairé,[2] son of Cónud, son of Iliach,
And Conaill, the triumphant, and the third,
Cuculain Mac Sualtam in his boyhood,
Like a star, pure and lustrous in the dawn.

"They strive for the champion's seat of Ulla,
And thither to the lake they have come
To abide by the word of the wise Uath,
Dividing to each warrior his due."

UATH:

"Why from my face have ye torn
Mananān's veil, whereby we live unseen?
From my magic labours here by Loch Uath
Ye have roused me now in an evil hour."

[1] See p. 57.

[2] See Vol. I. pp. 173 and 174; and for Iliach, pp. 141 and 175. Cuculain was the greatest of the Ultonian champions, Conaill the second, and Lægairé the third.

CUCULAIN :

" Give us pardon for our fault, O mighty Uath,
But these claim the first right against me,
Saying their's is the Champion's Throne of Ulla,
But do thou decide between us three."

UATH :

" Go back, foolish boy, to thy tutors,
Strive not with thy betters, Cuculain ;
But do thou, Conaill, the victorious,
And Lægairé, of the triumphs, contend.

" Lay here upon this flag thy head, Lægairé,
With my adze I will cut thy neck in twain.
Do this and the glory I will give you,
And the Champion's Throne of Ulla shall be thine."

" Then fell thy noble countenance, Lægairé,
And thus sad-browed didst thou reply—
' In the battle-shock contending I will perish,
But not thus, not thus, O son of Imomain.' "

UATH :

" Thou hast won, O son of proud Amargin,
O golden-tresséd champion of Emain,
Fearless, bow thee down, Conaill, the mighty,
The glory and the championship are thine.

" Back he shrank, Conaill, the Victorious,
His heavy-tresséd locks shook with rage—
' I care not for glory if thou slay me—
What avails me my glory if I die.'

" Then glowed thy bright face, O Setanta,
And thou layedst thy bright head upon the flag,
Crying, ' Give me the great honour, mighty Uath,
To be Champion of Ulla though I die.

" ' Be my name renowned among the nations,
Be my glory sung through all time,
I shall live in the list of Ulla's champions,
I fear not thy adze, just and wise Mac Imomain.'

" Then the god leaned down over Setanta,
Drawing back the yellow hair from his white neck,
And beside Cuculain upon the flag-stone
His tears rained down for the boy.

" Three times upon thy neck, O Setanta,
He loweréd the cold shining brass,
Then he cried, ' Arise, O Setanta !
Rise Champion of Ulla, O fearless Cuculain.[1] ' "

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOR REEGA.

" She could have ta'en
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck ;
Or, with a finger stayed Ixion's wheel."
KEATS.

So sang the bard, and the warriors shouted their approval, but an angry light flashed from the great Queen's eyes, and her noble countenance was marred with great

[1] It will be remarked that this eagerness for personal distinction does not mark the manhood of Cuculain.

wrath, and no longer could she restrain her indignant words—

"Surely, now the insolence of the bards has come home to ourselves. No longer is it rumoured only, and whispered, that ye supplant kings and disturb openly the ancient just authority which we have derived from our ancestors, for now it is both seen and heard. Verily, now for the last time will ye practise your insolence before me if for aught I rule a queen over the Olnemacta. Is it not enough that you sit at the banquets of kings, and practise there your vile and worthless art, and feed yourselves fat upon the applause of the unwarlike septs, but that you should here rear unabashed your front of mutiny, gold-cinctured to our loss. Effeminate, unwarlike, resembling women, whose weapon is their intemperate tongue; worse than women, for they give birth to warriors, but you, laws to impoverish noble clans, lying tales, and pedigrees. Forsooth, you chronicle the past."

So spake the great Queen, vociferating, being grievously enraged, and forthwith every bard and bardic student, every ollav and shanachie,[1] all the preservers of pedigrees, and explainers of the laws arose from every quarter of the vast chamber, and came together around the roof-tree, with intent to depart all together, and convening elsewhere their assembly, determine how they should revenge themselves upon the insulting and tyrranous Queen, but her Fleeas answered, not at all terrified by her wrath or by her great power—

"What wild and silly words are these, O mighty

[1] The profession of the Ollav more concerned the laws, that of the Shanachie' history.

Queen of the Olnemacta. Truly, thy noble father would now be sad hearing thee, whom in his palace at Temair oftentimes I beheld enriching with wealth and honour the far-coming bards of all this realm. Thee to asperse the singing men of Eiré ! who guard with rhyméd tuneful words the wisdom of all the wizards of ancient times, together with the heroic deeds of our ancestors, and the ramifications of the tribes and noble clans, who inflame with heroic thoughts the minds of youthful warriors, and cause the aged to forget their shrunken limbs, the heavy weight of years, and the cold approach of death, and who but they know the words of power which draw down the Tuátha Dē Danān from their mountains to our aid, or from their mounded grassy palaces and stone-girt Dûns ?[1] Rightly, too, O thou most unjust Queen, have they this night praised the heroic son of Sualtam, who perished nobly on the borders of Ulla, contending singly against the whole host of the Tân."

But her, in turn, the mighty sovereign of the Olnemacta, scornfully addressed :—

" Too soon, O wife of Aileel Finn, dost thou begin to brandish an intemperate tongue, forgetting how late I chastised[2] thee rebellious, when I scattered to the forest all thy mutinous clans, having conquered thee in battle, and wasted thy realm, and possessed myself of thy herds. Beware lest now, too, with blows, I expel thee from my palace, thy soft, admiring husband, and the singing men, thy lovers, notwithstanding."

Then arose Aileel Finn, king of the Gamanradians, to defend his wife, and with him the nobles of the Gamanradians, and of the Partree dwellers by the Suc, and

[1] See pp. 84 and 85. [2] See Tân-bo-Fleeas.

arose the kings of North Munster, the Ernai,[1] and the Clan Dēga, even Cathīr Mac Eterskel and Cairbré[2] the fair and great, assisting them; and Yeoha Mac Luchta, the irresistible might; also, Fiecha, the fierce, generous son of Fir-Phœbé, and with him the chiefs of the Ultonian exiles, enraged about Cuculain; and now, indeed, it seemed a feast to which the swine-herd[3] of Bōve Derg might come, ending in drawn weapons and senseless slaughter, for the Maineys arose against the southern kings; and Cet the son Maga, with the giants of Moyrisk against the Gamanradians, and the three Red Heads, and the battalion of the strangers[4] against the exiles. So there was a deafening clamour of enraged voices, and vociferations, and fierce threats; and already many a shield had leaped from its place, and many a flashing sword screeched from its scabbard, and amid the storm the bright weapons glittered like innumerable flashes of swift lightning, for the vast chamber was filled with loud shoutings, and fierce faces, and uproar not to described.

But amid the uproar Fleeas, herself, moved not, but sat with her countenance pale and distorted, and wide-staring eyes, and she screamed such a cry as a woman renders who, in the gloaming sees some intolerable sight,

[1] The Ernai was the ancient race-name of the Clan Dēga ere their expulsion from Ulster, where they held territory around Lough Erne.

[2] See Vol. I. p. 104, Cairbré Finn Mōr = fair, great. Compare the speech of Achilles to Priam, where he calls himself fair and great. He was the son of Conairey Mōr, king of Ireland, who was slain on the Dodder. I have, myself, seen the ancient rath or dûn in which was the palace of Da Derga where he was assassinated.

[3] This mythological being was present at the death of Conairey Mōr.

[4] These were Gaulish mercenaries praised by Queen Meave for their activity. T. B. C. p. 27.

and she dropping her burden stands rooted to the spot. So screamed the prophetic queen, and simultaneously the regal silver canopy sounded, smitten by the High King. Thereat a sudden silence, and the warriors stood without speech or motion; and in the silence was heard the whimpering of the hounds which fled to the upper end of the chamber; then also was heard a noise of trampling feet, with sudden fearful questions and short cries, for without all was terror and commotion. As when in a city one hears without the rush of crowds when a conflagration has arisen, or a civic tumult with the noise of deadly weapons plied afar, so, to compare great things with small, was the noise of the innumerable trampling feet of those without rushing past the pavilion portending some disaster. But a second time Fleeas cried aloud and pointed southward, and men looked down the pavilion, and lo! at the further end of the vast chamber, a shape gigantic, as it were of a woman, seen indistinctly like an image in agitated water, and as if equipped for war, for the beamy cath-barr[1] shone above a calm immense countenance, and then was the likeness of a broad shield seen through mists. But the apparition moved from the west eastward.

Said Fleeas, "It is the great daughter of Ernmās."[2]

[1] A helmet. Cath-barr "battle-top."

[2] This was the Mōr Reega or Great Queen, the chief female divinity of the ethnic Irish. She seems to have been hostile to Cuculain during the earlier portion of his career, and friendly during the latter. She was also called Dana. The Paps in Kerry were called so from her, being anciently the two paps of Dana, so we may imagine to what Titan-like dimensions the imagination of the ancient Irish raised her. She was the wife and sister of the Dagda (Zeus), and thus corresponds to Heré in the Greek mythology. She was present at the death of Cuculain in the form of a grey-necked crow. *Cf.* Pallas Athené appearing in the Ilaid as a cormorant.

Forthwith upbroke the assembly in wild disorder, and some came pouring through the wide doorway, trampling down the guards; and they brake the banner-staff on the right side of the door, and the multitude without beheld where the banner of the High Queen of the Olnemacta fell, but others tare asunder the wattled walls of the pavilion, pouring forth from that chamber, horror-stricken; but without there was a burning of innumerable torches, and the whole host was congregated in the great central square, the plain of the hostings, and in all the avenues leading thither; and they surged this way and that, for a rumour had gone abroad, and the seers said that they had seen the great war goddess of the Gæl. Then stood the Mōr Reega herself, in the midst of the camp of Meave, and shouted three times, and three times the great host of the Tân was confused, and those who fell were trampled upon by the rest, and many of the horses escaped that night, and with their fear-stricken hoofs slew and wounded many warriors.

CHAPTER VII.

THE COMING FOE.

"Such a face
Pulled Priam's curtains."

SHAKESPEARE.

It was at this time that Fergus Mac Roy came forth out of his tent in the eastern quarter of the camp upon a rising ground, and stood gigantic before the narrow entrance. Round him, too, stood certain noble and

potent warriors of the Tân, not indeed those foremost in birth and rank, but such as by native vigour and wise counsel guided the policy of the many nations and warlike clans, proud and jealous, and ever on the verge of intestine war, and whose sole bond of ùnion was their fear of Fergus Mac Roy, and a common reverence for the noble and divine-seeming Queen of the Olnemàcta. Of such discordant elements was composed that mighty host, differing much in this from the Red Branch of the Ultonians, which even now in the stilly moon-lit night, merciless, breathing vengeance, having awaked from their magic sorrow, travelled southwards with great marches, the descendants of Rury, even the irresistible might of the Crave Rue.

So stood Fergus Mac Roy, looking westward, with a fierce alarm in his gathered brows; for early that night there came into the camp a sad herald of disaster from the east, and Fergus had here in his own tent convened his private saba, and they, too, hearing the mighty voice, and hearing the confused outcry of the host, had issued quickly from their branchy booth. As when to one climbing a marine upland, and who has at last surmounted its rocky crest, there appears suddenly and unawares the vast floor of the boundless Lir, its billowy surface swept by dark blasts, under a grey, sullen sky, and ever across the agitated main the white waves keep tossing, and in his ear resounds the immense roar of the sea, and the murmuring thunder of the hollow caverns along the iron shore. Even such to Fergus, issuing from his tent-door, was the aspect of the vast host of Meave, surging this way and that, under the cold light of the moon, agitated and confused, both over the

plain of the hostings and through the streets and martial alleys and squares of the immense camp, panic-stricken, with an endless roar, like the roaring of the sea. Then shouted Fergus to his guard to follow quickly with the Barr-buah,[1] and he sprang into his chariot, ready harnessed, for he had intended to drive round to all the scouts and outposts that night, on account of tidings received; and there sprang in beside him Cormac Duvlingas, and Fiecha Mac Fir-Phœbé sprang upon the pole of the chariot, and so stood, active as a wild cat of the mountains, a trained chariot-fighting hero of the Ultonians. So they fared westward with speed, and the guard and saba of the chieftains followed on foot. But soon they encountered the multitude, fleeing as from the pursuit of a victorious foe, even now slaughtering the broken rear; and Fergus sprang from the chariot, shouting amongst the fugitives, in vain, nor heeded they his words or his strong hands. Then, for they could no further advance, Fergus gave the horses to Cormac Duvlingas to guard, and went forward on foot with Fiecha Mac Fir-Phœbé, moving through the torrent of the fugitives, dividing them asunder with their might. But so advancing, they saw Roaring Mainey, son of Aileel and Meave, sheltering himself at the east side of a great beech tree, and Fergus shouted to him to join them; and after that they met Cet the great son of Magah, sweeping back the fugitives, and he joined them too, and so they

[1] For allusions to this war-trumpet, see Pub. Oss. So., Vol. I., p. 139; also Vol. II., p. 157, where it is called the Dord-Fian. It was believed to have been first invented in the age of the gods, by three powerful deities, grandsons of the Dagda.

arrived at the royal pavilion on the edge of the plain of the hostings. Then Fergus bade Mainey to give that command which signified every tribe to his captain, and every nation to his king, for he had a voice that reached far, louder than a thousand men. Thereat, Roaring Mainey sprang into an empty horseless chariot, hard by the pavilion, and shouted mightily, and his voice rang through the host, recalling from their panic the kings and the great champions, but the multitude still fled. Therefore again Fergus bade him shout to the keepers of the Barr-buah, that they should blow that blast which signified the same order, and they heard him, for they were following in the track of Fergus, and had reached the quarter of Aileel Finn and the Gamanradians. Therefore they enclosed the Barr-buah with a rampart of strong warriors against the rushing crowd; and letting down upon the ground the support of the Barr-buah, they put each man of the twelve his lips to his own tube, for twelve tubes rayed out from the great bell-shaped mouth of that gigantic horn. Then pealed through the camp the wholesome warlike blast of the Barr-buah, heard oft ere this in the din of battle, both by the warriors of the Olnemacta in their many western wars which they had waged under Fergus, and by all in the great battles in Murthemney, when the host of Meave had riven the battalions of the north, what time Amergin and Cethern, Fintann and Meann Mac Salcōgan, contended against the men of Erin, seeking to resist the irresistible, after the defeat and death of Cuculain. Thus, far and wide through the camp, pealed the voice of the Barr-buah, stilling the tumult; and straightway, in the lessened din and the appeased

outcry, there arose the shouting of the captains and kings, summoning each his warriors, and the gathering cry of every sept and nation, tribe and warlike clan, and the huge confused host sifted itself on every side, dividing itself swiftly into cohorts and steady battalions around their chiefs. For as the wild waters of a cataract, which, with a roaring and water-spouts and much foam, fling themselves headlong down the face of some rugged cliff, and after, collect not far below into the still, deep pools of the river, winding silent through the lea; or as those industrious multitudes which, from their strawy citadel, swarming forth behind their queen, then, at the sound of the stricken brass, settle silently around her, after their confused flight, and hang in a pear-shaped cluster from the bending branch of the apple tree, or thorn, or the slender-limbed, white-blossomed, gum-exuding cherry, so around their chiefs those flying, disordered masses arrayed themselves in squares and martial circles, in regiments and troops, before the royal pavilion, under the eye of their dread captain and their queen; for she, having vanquished her panic, came forth from the recesses of the pavilion, where before, in the inmost places of it, she had secreted herself, having fled through the host like a timid hare; but now surrounded by her five gigantic sons,[1] Mainey Ahremail, and Mainey Mahremail, Mainey of the much-boasting, Roaring Mainey, and Jocund Mainey, of the merry laughter and light heart, also Oll[2] and Okna, captains of the household troops, and the sons of the King of Caillé, and Fer-lōga,[3] the esquire of Aileel; and when

[1] T. B. C., p. 12; also Bruidin Da Derga, Crowe MSS.

[2] T. B. C., p. 265.

[3] Fer or Far, appearing in many names, in the Latin, Vir.

they beheld her, gold-crowned and erect, in the midst of her guard, standing beside Fergus Mac Roy, with the light of the many torches shining on the golden mind,[1] and the brooch of Fardia upon the spaces of her noble breast, the immense host out on the moon-lit plain shouted, deeming that there was nought created which might compare with their peerless queen.

Thereafter, Meave bade Fergus to proclaim a meeting of the great council of the Tân—and most reluctantly did Fergus obey that order—and a second time the Barr-buah sounded, convening the assembly of the kings and princes, those who composed the great council of the confederated host. These, having assembled straightway from every part of the great plain, Queen Meave harangued, not being at all slow or unready of speech.

"O kings, and tanists, rie-damnas,[2] and captains, champions, and illustrious ornaments of the Tân, verily now I rejoice that no enemy hangs this night upon our rear; for like a flock of timid sheep invaded by wolves would ye have been against his onset, had he, the mighty monarch of the Ultonians, descended then upon the camp, hearing the vast tumult, and seeing the confusion not to be described. It beseems brave warriors to meet their enemies fearlessly in the din of battle, and fearlessly to receive the visitations of the immortal gods what time they choose to permit their dreadful voices to be heard, and their forms seen plainly, as in the

[1] A sort of open crown or tiara.

[2] Tanist, the elected successor to an existing king. Rie-damna, the material of a king, *i.e.*, one powerful and conspicuous enough to be elected, and of royal blood.

ancient days, ere the coming of the Clan Milith. Yet I, being but a woman, have this night put the boldest of you to shame, receiving reverently, and without fear, the intimations of Elathān's mighty daughter,[1] whose coming portends, not war or disaster, as your false prophets allege, but this deviseth the Mōr Reega that, under her sanction, shall be the conclusion of the great foray, and the prosperous dispersion of the Tân. Four divinities have been my allies in this war, bearing invisible aid—Feithleen the prophetess and Oirchill the earth-goddess; Angus[2] Mac-an-Dagda and the Mōr Reega. Now, therefore, under the sanction of the great daughter of Ernmās, I announce unto you the dispersion to-morrow of the Tân, and to-morrow the division of the booty, the flocks and herds, and the innumerable booty torn from the rich plains of Ulla we have ravished. For I think not that those much-vaunted heroes of the Clanna Rury will anywhere assail us, but that they will follow afar off, that they may recover such of the cattle as, being overdriven, may die upon the way, or that they may gather the remnant of our abundant feasts, after the manner of outcasts, a recreant race, slaves to a bearded and bard-loving king, who, sheltered in their strong Dûns and their fortresses, palisaded and trenched, beheld in tears the devastation of their fertile and well-cultivated land, the smoke of their burning farmsteads,

[1] Elathān was the father of the Mōr Reega. For his pedigree, see p. 72.

[2] See p. 71; also pp. 51 and 265, Vol. I. He was the most beautiful of all the gods. He followed invisibly the course of the Tân, as a patron of Queen Meave. The cause why is explained in the tale published in No. 11 of the *Révue Celtique*, p. 347.

and the herds of cattle and lines of weeping captives, winding afar across the plain. Doubtless now the tuneful king, with his singing-men, is vexing his brain for rhymes and measured words, that he may chaunt musically the history of his woes, and recalls many ancient childish tales amongst his captains, bidding them remember the expulsion of the Clanna Nemedh out of Ulla, at the hands of the Fomoroh, and how the gods themselves brought tribute humbly to the tax-gatherers of Balōr Bailcmenna, and doubtless likens me myself to Kethlenn, the merciless sovereign of the Fomoroh. Let them rhyme, and weep, and lament too the coming time as the past, for now indeed I announce the dispersion of the Tân; but again, in the harvest season, I shall summon to Rath Cruhane all my faithful allies, that we may reap the rich corn-fields of the Ultonians, that we may sack their fortresses, and fill up their trenches, and impose upon themselves servile tributes."

So spake the great Queen of the Olnemacta, vaunting amongst her warriors, and dismissed the assembly; and they, reverencing her rebuke, but rejoicing and exultant, returned each man to his company and each king to his own nation. Then on every side down the streets and ways of the camp poured continually the regiments of the Tân, battalion after proud battalion, unarmed and unbannered, but with martial strides, bare-kneed, with their brattas of many hues, long-haired, dauntless warriors, larger than human, gigantic-seeming in the moony night. From distances more and more remote sounded the tread of the retiring warriors, and Queen Meave turning looked upon Fergus Mac Roy.

Then Fergus smiled grimly in reply, and the great

queen was embarrassed, and her countenance fell, and she said :—

"Thou alone whom a wandering beaten exile I received into my kingdom, whom I have made a prince in my realm, and general over my host, ever answerest me with contumelious words and looks;" and she, turning round, hastened to fly within into the pavilion. But ere she reached the doors there stood one there, whom, seeing the great spear fall from her hands, and she, trembling, stood still and addressed :—

"Who and whence art thou, O herald of evil tidings, whose white hollow visage looks out through gory stains? Why comest thou here to affright me with defaced and shattered shield, leaning with red hands on thy broken spear? Tell me not thy tidings, for I will not hear."

But the other, obeying a gesture from Fergus Mac Roy, answered :—

"Not redder are my hands than at set of sun were the waters of the silver-flowing Boyne with the blood of thy choice warriors. Two mighty champions of the Clanna Rury, with three hundred chariots, descended upon thy rear-guard, encumbered with women and captives, as we crossed the Boyne ford.[1] Till set of sun we fought, and I alone have escaped to the camp. To me not men did they seem, but of the race of the giants. One was bearded, with blue eyes that flashed like glittering swords, and there was the likeness of a woman

[1] I cannot identify this Ford. Before the composition of the existing heroic literature it bore some ancient name, but subsequently was called simply "The Ford," which seems to have been sufficient to distinguish it from others having specific names. This skirmish is described, T. B. C., p. 305.

painted in the midst of his shield, the other wore a black bratta with an iron pin for a brooch."

"I know those warriors,[1]" said Fergus; "the first is Concobar Mac Nessa, monarch of all Ulla, and the second is Kelkar, the son of Uther; they rank second in war amongst the Ultonians, second only, O wife of Aileel Mōr. Verily, O Queen of the Olnemacta, it was not by feeble or faint-hearted warriors that I was expelled out of the North; and, save Cet of Moyrisk and the three Red Heads of Leinster, and Yeoha, son of Luchta, what warriors has the Tân brought together who might compare with my exiles, with the great son of Concobar Mac Nessa, with Cormac Duvlingas Duvac Dœl Ulla, and Fiecha Mac Fir-Phœbé. This know, O High Queen, that the dispersion of the Tân means the destruction of the Olnemacta and of every nation with which now is girt the standard of Rath Cruhane, who will be overtaken and destroyed in quick succession by the swift-travelling northern warriors. Thou shalt therefore prolong the division of the booty, that the gathered might of the Four Provinces may together confront the Red Branch, who assuredly will now no longer tarry, but swiftly descend upon the Tân."

Then came forward Mainey Mahremail, and led his mother, pale-faced and amazed, within the pavilion, where, at the northern extremity, was the chamber of Aileel and Meave, and there Aileel already lay slumbering, for it was in the early part of the night that he

[1] For the appearance and dress of Concobar, see p. 324, T. B. C.; see also Vol. I., pp. 125 and 172. For those of Kelkar, p. 330, T. B. C., also pp. 139, 179, Vol. I. The Irish spelling of his name is Cealtchair Mac Uitchear. For further particulars, M. and C. passim.

was wont to sleep; but the great queen sat down upon the edge of the couch sobbing, and Mainey Mahremail comforted her in vain.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN ANCIENT AMBULANCE.

"*1st Fool*—
"I like that music. It expresses the subdued joy with which—
"*2nd Fool*—
"A physician accepts his fee."

H. P.

MEANWHILE the other Maineys had made a litter with their spears, spread their cloaks upon the same, and were bearing the escaped of Concobar through the camp westward to the tent of Sohl,[1] the wise southern leech and bone-setter. For him the men of Meave had made a tent with four[2] doors opening to the four winds, and through the tent there flowed a clear stream of dark water lit with the reflection of many candles fixed in candlesticks, standing out from the tree-trunks, and through the spacious chamber the unconscious stream murmured bearing down to the Boyne the blood of the men of Meave. For without the tent and within were many warriors and camp followers, and women who had been wounded in the great collision. When panic-

[1] See p. 262, T. B. C.

[2] This curious arrangement, as well as the stream running through the house, was necessitated by the Brehon law. Meave careful of her wounded, T.B.C., 317. See M. and C., Vol. I.; p. 319.

stricken the huge host had rushed together, and many had fallen and been trampled, and many a bone had snapped in the dense collision, and with them the wise, grave physician was concerned, binding up their wounds with flaxen linaments and setting the broken bones. Now when the Maineys entered by the eastern door, bearing their faint burthen, he was attending to Oblinni,[1] a son of Conairy Mōr, a great prince amongst the Clan Dega. Over his left foot, upon the instep, a chariot wheel had passed, and the silver buckle of his shoe had been forced into the flesh and the bones within contused. He, the wounded prince, sat upon the grassy bank upon a cloak, with his injured foot in the stream, and the physician standing in the stream was with one hand sponging the foot, and he held a forceps in the other, stooping down, examining it attentively, and by his side stood a student holding a waxen taper. There, in the great chamber, filled with suffering and groans, the Maineys set down their burthen, waiting until the great son of Conairy Mōr should have his wounded foot bound, and the disordered bones restored to their places. But when this was done they drew his attention to their charge. Lewy[2] was his name, the son of Dolamine; and Sohl, looking upon him, said:—

"Thee indeed first of all will I with my own hands attend, O Lewy, son of Dolamine, not alone for the sake of these who have brought thee, but for his sake, Cuculain, son of Sualtam, to whom thou wast once dear. For after one of the great battles in Murthemney, when our host routed the army of Cethern Mac Finntann, and

[1] See Vol. I., p. 104.
[2] T. B. C., p. 148.

he himself escaped[1] covered with wounds and blood, and keeping his bowels in their place only by pressing against the dashboard of the chariot while the horses fled madly awry unguided, at midnight was I summoned secretly to attend a great northern warrior, who lay at death's door, unattended, and I was promised a great reward. Then, escaping the sentinels of the host, and following my guide, I traversed the vast forest which lies between Fochainé[2] and the sea in East Murthemney, and then at last reached a place where lay dying an immense warrior, fierce, though in death-pangs, red-haired, and his merciless eyes rolled furiously as he lay tossing to and fro, and from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot there was no part of his body which was not slashed with cruel wounds, and beside him there sat a most noble lady[3] weeping, and endeavouring—not unskilfully—to staunch the outpouring of blood, beside whom lay a heap of armour, unstained and uncut, and weapons of war, bright as though they had been taken that moment out of the armoury.

"There, then kneeling down, I carefully examined his wound; and as my custom is, seeing that there was no hope, I bade him prepare for death, rashly indeed, for I knew not the very fierce nature of the man, for he,

[1] T. B. C., p. 260.

[2] Somewhat to the north of Ardee, Co. Louth. The name Ardee takes its name from the single combat between Cuculain and Fardia, Vol. I., Chap. xlv. The full Irish name is Ath Firdia, the ford of Fardia, pronounced Ah Hirdia, and corrupted into Ardee. His tomb is there to the present day.

[3] This was the wife of Cethern*; see Vol. I., pp. 144 and 177. She came after her husband with his arms. At the present moment Cethern is with the Red Branch. We shall hear of him again.

starting from the ground like a ferocious mastiff whom one carelessly arouses, seized me with his irresistible hands, and would have straightway torn my head from my shoulders, for in his hands I had not the strength of a sparrow firm grasped in the talons of a hawk, while he shouted most horribly, and I thought that not even a god could then save me. Nevertheless there came a youth, tall and handsome, but with a pallor as of death in his hollow visage, nobler and fairer to look upon than any of the Clan Milith, and he, with one hand, for the other was in a sling, shook us asunder, and laid him, my assailant, back upon the couch; but I myself hastened gladly out of that place, and with extreme difficulty did I again emerge upon the moony plain. Now at first I deemed that my preserver was Cian[1] the Slender, who is wont to haunt that forest, or one of the other mountain-roaming, immortal princes of the Tuátha Dē Danān, so beautiful and so unearthly did he seem to me. But now having conversed with those well acquainted with him, I believe that it was the spirit of the great son of Sualtam, who perished alone in that forest after the combat with the Fardia, which I saw not, for it was upon the next day that I reached the camp, having been detained in my own country by a cruel plague which wasted the inhabitants. But come now, O son of Dolamine, and let me see if my art is equal to thy cure."

[1] Cian the Slender was one of the gods and the father of Lu Lamfáda, the most potent of their deities after the Dagda; see pp. 43 and 72, also *post.* Cian was slain by the sons of Turann; see p. 198, Vol. I. Three times he brake forth out of his tomb; see "The Children of Turann," new Atlantis.

So spake the kind and garrulous physician; but Lewy Mac Dolamine answered, that there were others needing his art more than himself, and that, if the sons of Aileel would return to their tents, he would wait until those dangerously wounded were first examined. But Mainey Ahremail answered indignantly, and overbore the weak opposition of the generous Lewy. There then the wise physician washed his limbs in the running stream, nor had he any grievous wound, save one upon the left thigh, where the scythed chariot of Cumascrah[1] Mend Macha had cut through to the bone on the outside, a span's distance from the hip, and very narrowly had the great artery escaped incision. It he had himself bound rudely as he travelled in his chariot, escaping from the great slaughter. But when the leech had applied healing herbs and bound up the wounds, Mainey the boastful presented him with a curved bar of gold, and they removed Lewy Mac Dolamine in like manner, and he slept in the tent of Mainey Ahremail, having received nourishing drinks, and there sat beside him through the night one of the esquires of that prince.

[1] Written Cowshra in Vol. I,. the *m* being mute in the modern pronunciation, I prefer, however, to retain the sound. He seems to have been the greatest of the sons of Concobar. Queen Meave, congratulating herself on the panic of the Ultonians, refers specially to him, "Cumaserah is under fear in his island, and I fear nothing from the Ultonians." Ossianic Society, Vol. II., p. 109.

CHAPTER IX.

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI.

"Ay hand and hand into the bower,
Where my lord's roses blow."

KEATS.

Now, after Queen Meave had retired to her pavilion, Fergus Mac Roy and his guards went forth to inspect the sentinels and outposts; and they went through the camp, till they came to the eastern extremity, where was the battalion of Cormac Conlingas, nine hundred men, three hundred chariot fighters, and three hundred charioteers, and three hundred strong and active spearmen, the flower of the exiles. For Cormac occupied the extreme right, and next to him, as one might travel westward, the battalion of Cormac Duvlingas, and next to him the battalion of the Chaffer,[1] and then the quarter of Fergus Mac Roy and his sons, with Fiecha Mac Fir-Phœbé, intrepid and generous, a stripling, but though young and an exile, already powerful amongst the midmost nations of Eiré, those who bordered on the province of Yeoha Mac Luchta, recalling amongst the southern tribes the glory of his heroic foster-father, bravest of the Red Branch after Cuculain. When they reached the western extremity of the camp, Cormac Conlingas and his people left them, and Fergus and his guards drove out into the open country eastward, in

[1] See *post.*

the direction of the upper Boyne, over the moony plain, and after that northwards and westward, and so they encircled the camp; and Fergus inspected too the arrangements of the booty and captives on the south side of the camp, and the disposition of the guards and sentinels there, lest any thievery should be committed by the camp followers, who in great numbers gathered southwards about a mile distant from the camp, and of the men of war, and so Fergus encircled the camp, and returned through the quarter of the battalion of Cormac Conlingas.

But, in the meantime, Cormac, after he had parted from Fergus, entered his tent, lit with a single dim burning candle, and approached where, at the western extremity, lay extended, rolled up in their rugs, two mighty warriors, their giant strength relaxed in slumber, and touched them softly with the nether end of his spear, one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and they awaking, looked up, and when they saw the splendid chieftain, who also was their host, they sat up, and the soft influence of slumber was still shed over their minds. Then said Cormac in a low voice:—

"This night the oft-repeated warnings of Fergus have been disregarded, and the High Queen, yielding to the far-coming allied kings, eager to share the booty and return to their homes, hath announced to-morrow the division of the prey, and the dispersion of the host of Tân. Moreover, the Red Branch have awaked far and wide out of their magic stupor, and this awakening will be the destruction of us, the exiles, and of the Olnemacta, after the departure of the allied kings, for alone, as you well know, we are not able to contend with the Crave Rue,

nor can we escape by swift marches across the Shannon, travelling as we do with much cattle and captives, and laden with the booty of the Ultonians. Upon you now, therefore, I lay this charge, O Alvey and Conalvey, and dread ye to be slack, or unwary, or unfaithful in what I desire. Return now to the Red Branch, as though ye had come southwards to glean tidings, for ye will find the Ultonians beyond this northern forest, and thence north-westward to Ard Cuillin,[1] for the hosting was at Ath-Na-Forarey, and report that the Tân is encamped here hard by the hill of Fremain, on the plain of the tomb of Uta, lying at random, without order or discipline, and disputing too over the booty, which they will more readily believe on account of that other civil war, waged on the plains of the Fardia, when the Munster kings invaded the quarter of the Olnemacta, enraged about Rōka Mac Athemain, and Fionavar, the princess-royal. The ground be fire under your wheels, and your horses swifter than hawks, for ere noon to-morrow the Ultonians must descend upon the army of the Tân."

So spake the glittering son of Concobar Mac Nessa, and they, the Ultonian deserters, delayed not, but went out and awaked their charioteers, and straightway they harnessed their horses and uncovered the chariots, and, like gliding phantoms, they disappeared into the night.[2] Playmates and foster-brothers were they of Cormac, and honoured him before all others. But after they had left, Cormac summoned one of his attendants, who

[1] Now Slieve Gullion, Ultonian hostings held there. See Battle of Moy Leana, Royal Irish Academy. For Ath-na-Forārey, see Vol. I., p. 127.

[2] T. B. C., p. 31.

followed him to the hastily-constructed booth where were his racing steeds, who with their swift hoofs had borne away for him many prizes in the chariot races, encircling the tombs of those who perished on the plains of Murthemney, and also many times in the west, when the Olnemacta celebrated with games the rites of ancient heroes, Corrgen,[1] who sacked Aula Neid, or Senn, or Gann, or Tiherna Tedbanna; and they, neighing when they heard his well-known footstep, looked round with bright large eyes and erected ears, and Cormac went from one to the other, passing his white hand over their glossy skins. Yet leaving his steeds, Cormac not yet retired to rest, but returning to his tent, he bade the attendant pour out ale, and he, from the leathern ale-bottle,[2] removed the silver-adorned stopper, and poured forth the ale, and he himself taking from its sheath a small timpan, sat against the sylvan wall upon his couch, and touching the strings, sang in a low voice. Yet not of the glorious deeds of heroes did the son of Concobar then sing, nor of the fortunes of his ancestors, nor of the all-powerful Shee[3] dwelling in the mountains, ruling invisibly over the race of Milith.

[1] These were all more ancient heroes; I have not space to give all particulars and references I would desire. Those interested in the various characters will look to the indexes of O'Curry's and O'Donovan's Works, also of the Publications of Ossianic Society. Aula Neid was a temple, see p. 86.

[2] See Adamnan's Life of St. Columba—the story of the bottles left on the sea shore.

[3] Gælice, Sidhe, synonomous with Túatha Dē Danān, *i.e.*, the gods. See pp. 56, 57, and 58.

CHAPTER X.

DUVAC DÆL ULLA.

"He ended frowning, and his looks denounced
Desperate revenge, and battle dangerous."

MILTON.

DURING the night there was silence through the vast and wide host; but at day-dawn Duvac Dæl Ulla left his tent, his pale, noble countenance lit with a gloomy triumph,[1] and he looked forth upon the silver-misty morning, and the dew-besprinkled hoary grass, not yet glittering in the sunbeams. Black and glistering as the back of a cock-chaffer was his rolling hair, parted in the middle, flowing densely over his mighty shoulders; black were his smooth, straight eyebrows, and black his fearless eyes—but pale was the face of the great exile. Black too was all his raiment, his bratta, and brooch, and lena, and black the waist scarf that reached to his white, strong knees.[2] Such was Duvac Dæl Ulla, the

[1] He had dreams of approaching battle, T. B. C., p. 306. His name signifies the dark hero, the cock-chaffer of Ulla.

[2] For the dress of the Irish at this time, see O'Curry's Manners and Customs, Vol. III.; also, Vol. I. of this History, pp. 222 and 223. I have seen it stated that, during the Norman period, the native Irish, even the chiefs, went with bare feet, but the bardic and early monkish literature allude to this as often as to any other article of attire. See the passages collected by O'Curry. Adamnan speaks of sandals. In the Battle of Moy Tura the Upper, "the Dagda's" shoes are alluded to and described, though each of them must have taken the whole hide of an ox, so gigantic does he appear in that tale.

Black Prince of the Ultonians, out-topping by a head the two huge spearmen that stood before the tent-door, once a pillar of the sovereignty of Concobar while the Red Branch was undivided, now great amongst the Olnemacta, and he commanded three hundred men, occupying a place in the right wing of the host. For Cormac Conlingas occupied the extreme right, and Cormac Duvlingas was next him, and Duvac Dæl Ulla next to him, as one might travel westward to the Queen's pavilion, and each of these warriors commanded three hundred men, but Cormac thrice three, and next to Duvac was the quarter of Fergus Mac Roy.

Through his own quarter fared Duvac, and entered the quarter of Cormac Duvlingas, and the sentinels in warriors' wise saluted the great exile; and he, passing the tent of Duvlingas, leaned inwards, holding the door pillars with his arms, and shouted to his friend, and from within Duvlingas slumbrously responded, not being yet well awake; and Duvac Dæl Ulla laughed. After that he fared eastward again and entering the quarter of Cormac Conlingas, passed down the ordered streets of that camp, till he reached the round and clean-built tent of the son of Concobar, conspicuous both by its size and excellence, and by the banner that hung down above its folds, hardly stirred in the gentle breath of the morning. Before the tent-door he found Cormac playing with his hounds, for they, having been recently loosed, bounded around him, but he with his spear was keeping them off. Diverse indeed was the appearance of the heroes, for Cormac's[1] countenance was fair and ruddy, and his hair yellow and lustrous; a bratta

[1] See Bruidin Da Derga.

of purple silk flowed from his shoulders, and on his breast shone a wheel-brooch of gold. His white lena was embroidered with crimson thread, and with crimson thread the collar thereof, that was turned down over the bratta, and his lena descended considerably lower than his knees, which was not customary in those days. Such was Cormac Conlíngas, the great son of Concobar Mac Nessa. He was the handsomest of the host of Meave, and after Fergus Mac Roy and Cet the son of Maga, the most valiant warrior.

Him, then, Dûvac Dœl Ulla addressed and said:—

"Not this time, O Son of Concobar, will we recross the Shannon with clean weapons. Such dreams have I this night had. I saw, as though with my waking eyes, the Red Branch riven by our spears, and the great knights of the Clanna Rury borne fainting from a field red with slaughter."

Then Cormac laughed, and said:—

"And thyself, O Dûvac, a black thundercloud, blotting out the stars of the chivalry of the Ultonians."

And Dûvac answered:—

"My attire is indeed black, but it impedes me not in the battle. O that and now I heard the war shout of the northern braggarts, and the vengeance-pealing cries of the exiles responding. Dost thou remember how they pursued us across the border, and went slaughtering our broken rear through Teffia,[1] and sent their insults after us like sling-bolts as we fled into the Olnemacta."

Now while he yet spake, there approached Fiecha Mac Fir-Phœbé and Conmac, son of Fergus.

[1] Districts in Westmeath.

And Cormac Conlingas said :—

" Of what account wert thou, O Duvac, and was I amongst the Ultonians, lesser lights at the best; but now we rule princes amongst the Olnemacta. Be content with thy glory, and with thy wide domains, and with thy share of this immense booty."

Then said Fiecha Mac Fir-Phœbé :—

" Often in dreams I beheld the winding Callan and the plain of the hostings at Emain Macha, and the trees upon the lawn where we, the young princes of the Clanna Rury, practised martial feats; and I awaked weeping in the night, and knew that I was an exile, cast forth out of my native land by the fierce and cold-hearted warriors of thy sire, ere yet I had won honour amongst the knights of the Ultonians. But now, seeing all these things once again, when we camped before Emain Macha, and sacked the defenceless streets and houses, methought that their beauty had vanished away, nor were they at all such to me as memory and dreams had reported; and dearer to me and nobler was the great lake of Lough Rie, with its silvery wide expanse, tufted with treey islands, and adorned with white sails, the thunders of the Shannon at the mouth of Lough Derg, and the great city of Ruth Cruhane,[1] and nobler to be the knight of our matchless and beautiful Queen than to serve any lord, Concobar Mac Nessa or another."

And Conmac, too, said the same things concerning Carrig Fergus;[2] for at the time of the great rebellion,

[1] The remains of this city are still to be seen near Rath Crogan, on the Connaught side of Lough Ree.

[2] This was the fortress of Fergus Mac Roy before his expulsion, and the site of the modern town.

he had been too young to be entered at the military school at Emain Macha.

Then Cormac Conlingas laughed at the impetuous boys, and bade his attendants prepare breakfast, and these four, with the comrades and the great captains of Cormac, feasted abundantly, drinking ale and mead, and eating roast flesh and baked cakes, and water cresses[1] plucked from the Brosna.

CHAPTER XI.

DIVISION OF THE BOOTY.

"There was a listening fear in her regard."

KEATS.

DURING the day there was a cheerful noise in the wide camp, arising from the division of the great booty, for the Saba of the High Queen sat in the royal pavilion, and herald youths holding white staves came and went in swift chariots, bearing to and fro their commands. Southward, over the vast plain, reaching to the Lake of Ennel, arose a far-diffused clamour, where they separated the huge herds, dividing to each nation its equitable share—a great work truly, for further than the eye could reach, and beyond the borders of the horizon, the plain was darkened with

[1] Cresses, a food, and used by princes. See Book of Rights, p. 9, where this very river, near which Meave's host is now encamped, is mentioned as producing cresses which the High King ought to eat. A superstitious efficacy was believed to reside in them.

the desolation of Ulla, for besides those beasts which had been slain each day, and besides those which had been sent westward with the Donn Cooalney, under the guardianship of the Clanna Morna,[1] there still remained fifteen thousand head of cattle, and twenty-seven thousand sheep, three thousand five hundred horses fit for farm labour, and for the draught of vehicles of pleasure and travel, and one thousand racing steeds. Few, however, were the war-horses and war-chariots, saving those that they had taken in battle on the plains of Murthemney, where they routed the battalions of Cethern Mac Fiontann and of Fiontann himself, of Meann Mac Salcōgan and Iliach, son of Cas, son of Factna; but these were mostly much damaged, save indeed the horses and chariot of Iliach, and these were not valuable;[2] but the Ultonians, from Assaroe to Carrig Fergus, had received their war-steeds within their strong fortresses, while the men of Meave wasted the open country. Besides all these, there were also goats, and asses, and swine innumerable. All these were being divided, and already many fires were lit over the vast plain, and the branders were marking upon the beasts the brand of each nation and sept, that their possessions might not be again inseparably mingled, and many camp-followers and slaves guarded each division of the booty.

[1] These were the people of Morna Mellach. The Clanna Morna were powerful in every generation henceforward. In the beginning of the third century they were predominant. Their king always bore the title of Morna with a distinguishing epithet. The daughter of this Morna Mellach was Moltaca, the wife of Conairey Mōr, and mother of Oball Oblinni and Cairbré Finn Mōr, appearing from time to time in this volume.

[2] See Vol. I., pp. 142 and 176.

Moreover, within the precincts of the camp was there also a division made of the stored grain and dried grass and roots, and of the plundered magazines of nuts and apples,[1] and of the rich household stuff ravished from innumerable desolated homesteads. The captives, too, were divided—five thousand women skilled in works, and three thousand comely girls, and two thousand active handsome boys.[2] These, in the extreme west of the camp, were guarded by the Fir-Domnans,[3] a Fir-bolgic nation, who possessed the country reaching from Jorrus Domnan to Assaroe and the borders of the Ultonians. Here, indeed, sounds of wailing were still heard, but most had recovered from their dejection, and were forecasting their lot, and recalled prophesies, for they said that the spirit of Cuculain would reappear coming out of fairy land, and drive the men of Meave to the forests, and here in the evenings was often heard the voice of singing men chaunting the great deeds of the Ultonians, and boys and girls danced to the music of the harp and the flute, not being by nature melancholy or easily cast down.

Until the sun had passed his meridian, Queen Meave sat anxious and troubled at the Saba, and started when appeared any messenger or herald coming from the flying squadrons of her chariot-riding chivalry, which scoured the open country eastward towards the Boyne

[1] One of the principal native products of the island; see Four Masters reign of Conairy Mōr. When the bards desire to express ideas of fertility they allude to this fruit in preference to corn.

[2] For the institution of slavery, see Book of Rights.

[3] One of the three great divisions of the Fir-bolgs.

and the realms of the King of Tara,[1] and ofttimes she wiped away the rising tear, being disturbed in her mind. But of these messengers none brought adverse tidings save one, Fræch Mac Fiach,[2] who with his troop came riding upon horses, and he, standing in the midst of the Saba, and holding in his right hand his long, many-ringed spear.

"Early this day, O Queen, there went a swift battalion of chariot-riding warriors out of Tara northwards, looking back as they went, dreading pursuit, and he who was in command was but a boy, his hair auburn, and his face freckled. He wore a scarlet bratta, with a silver brooch; loud and fierce was his voice, and most impetuous his demeanour. When they crossed the Boyne at Ath Truim, there met them two noble youths of the Ultonians, and delaying not for salutations they galloped northwards."

"I know that youth," said Cormac Conlingas. "It is Erc, son of Caibré Nia-Far, King of Tara, and Fèidelm, the daughter of Concobar Mac Nessa, and my own sister is his mother."[3]

So sat the Saba of the High Queen presiding over the

[1] This was Cairbré Nia-far, son of Rossa Roc. He is also called king of Ireland, probably in compliment to his possession of Tara. In this war he played a waiting game. Subsequently he fought against the Ultonians, but was defeated and slain at Ros-na-Ree on the Boyne.

[2] The mother of this hero was said to have been immortal; for his history, see M. and C., Vol. III., p. 10. He was an unsuccessful suitor of Fionavar.

[3] One of the most pathetic features of the heroic history is the affection of Acaill, the sister of Erc, for her brother. She was married to a chieftain in the north of Ireland, but hearing of his death, travelled southwards to Tara, where she was shown his head, and died of grief and terror. Her tomb, a great tumulus, is near that of Erc, close to

distribution of the booty: nor did there arise any serious difference concerning the equality of the division; for in the days of Meave, the great knights and champions of Eiré concerned themselves more with knightly deeds and thoughts, and relinquished to the base-born excessive zeal concerning wealth and its distribution.'

But when the sun had passed his meridian and was declining, the Saba was dismissed, and the great plain of the hosting cleared for sports and martial exercises. Then was set in front of the royal pavilion, facing northwards, the royal throne of Meave, and the great Queen sat thereon, surrounded by her warriors and the chief heroines of her host and her favourites, and looked upon the youth contending, for some played at goal, and there arose shouts and the clash of the brazen hurles as they pursued to and fro the running ball; and others cast massy pebbles, trying their strength; and others, galloping in their chariots, flung at a mark the battle-stone of the warrior; and so were the young warriors amusing themselves over the plain.

the hill of Tara. For her the Ultonians "celebrated bright pure games." Of Erc we shall hear again. For the description of Erc, see O'Curry MS. Materials, p. 514.

[1] The whole of the heroic literature is tuned to this generous note, as if wealth were dross, to be flung abroad, and lavished and despised.

CHAPTER XII.

QUEEN MEAVE AND HER COURTIERS.

"For eloquence the soul song charms the sense."

MILTON.

BUT after a space all these retired again to the camp, and the silent plain extended before them, bordered far away on the north by a great forest. Then revived the heart of the High Queen, when she saw how all things were tranquil, and that no disturbing messengers were coming from the east, and she conversed graciously amongst her knights, and turning to Queen Fleeas, she said:—

"How likest thou, O Fleeas, thy returning home, bringing with thee unhurt thy noble husband and thy valiant brother.[1] For to me, indeed, the days seem long until I see again my palace at Ruth Cruhâne, and hear the bridge echoing beneath the wheels of my chariot as I enter my own house, and embrace my dear daughter, Measa, who now doubtless awaits my return eagerly. In sad triumph, indeed, I return bereft of two dear children."

"Truly, O High Queen, I also think regretfully of my own home, and daily see the rampart of the Dûn thronged with my people joyfully welcoming my return. Moreover, there is a young ollav out of the kingdom of Luhar Dēga,[2] who for me has been collecting the his-

[1] Nia Seghamain.

[2] This was the ancient name of Kerry. The present name is derived from Ciar, a son of Fergus Mac Roy, who appears in present volume and in Vol. I., p. 195. Ciar-ree the descendants of Ciar corrupted into Kerry.

tory of the noble clans of the Partree and the achievements of their ancient heroes and heroines. Truly for many causes would I that I were now in my greenan,[1] having around me those wise men with whom I love to converse, regulating the affairs of my palace, and enjoying the society of my husband. Me too now, my dear child is doubtless anxiously awaiting."[2]

Then said Cormac Conlingas—

"Young, indeed, and not over-wise must those children be who desire to see attending to the ignoble occupations of the palace those who here are a terror to our enemies and a shield to the men of Erin; thee, O great Queen, before whom they say that Cuculain[3] himself fled when thou wentest forth alone against him, enraged for the slaying of the sons of Neara, and thee, O Queen of the Gamanradians, with whom the far-coming ollavs of the Tân delight to converse."

So spake the son of Concobar; and the Queens were well pleased, for he, Cormac Conlingas, was the admired of all the women of the west, and many contended for his favour. Moreover the young nobles, the riedamnas and tanists, and many kings also, were wont to imitate him in his dress and his behaviour; yet he, though he spake not thereof himself, thought much concerning his

[1] The women's quarter.

[2] Faun, the most beautiful of the heroines. "So called," sang an ancient bard, "because a tear in a bright eye was not purer or brighter." She is numbered amongst the six noblest women of Ethnic Ireland; see poem on death of Acaill, O'Curry, "MS. Materials," p. 515. A god (Len of Locha Lein, see p. 73) paid court to her, bringing vessels and ornaments of gold.

[3] "I know that woman well," said Cuculain, "and I myself would have fallen at her hands had I not fled." T. B. C, p. 265.

own beautiful palace beyond the Shannon, where daily a fair child looked eastward from her lofty greenan, if she might see the green-clad[1] warriors of her dear father returning. Moreover to her he had sent already many presents and tokens, and amongst them two sleek and fiery steeds, which he had plundered from the territory of Kelkar, the son of Uther, in the district of Sovarchy,[2] in the north, and he had sent directions to his chariot-makers to build a beautiful chariot, light and swift, using the most precious materials and the finest craftsmanship. With her, too, every year he was wont to travel eastward into the plains of Meave, that she might weep and perform the customary sacred rites at Rath Essa, where her gentle mother was interred. Nevertheless the much-loved Essa was now forgotten, and a disgraceful love possessed Cormac Conlingas.[3]

So were they conversing; but the great sun was going down slowly, robed in flaming clouds, and a wondrous stillness possessed the scene, for the noise of the camp was but as it were a low dim murmur.

Then said Queen Fleeas, the admired of many bards:—

"To me, indeed, O sweet-singing Ard-Ollav of the Olnemacta, it has often been a marvel how the bards of

[1] T. B. C., p. 13; also M. and C., Vol. III., p. 138.

[2] Sovarchy was one of the very ancient heroes and on the verge of the reign of the gods. Dun Sovarchy is now Dunseverick, near Giant's Causeway.

[3] Essa, daughter of Edair and Marga, was his wife. Edair gave its ancient name Benn Edar to the Hill of Howth. Essa's tomb, at her own request, was reared where she might at the same time see Tara, the Boyne, and Ben Edar, where she was born. Her daughter was Mesbocholla. Essa was the daughter of Yeoha Airēm, see M. and C. Vol. II., p. 106.

Erin, so numerous as they are, and with minds so open and wide-observing, will sing only of the deeds of war and the chase, of the adventures of ancient heroes and heroines, of the immortal mountain-dwelling princes, besides the pedigrees of noble clans, and the ancestral lore which on many subjects they preserve and transmit, and do not also hymn in soft sweet strains the beautiful aspects of the changing day, this sun now sinking into the west, monarch of the heavens, with his bratta of flaming clouds, the soft approach of evening, or the slowly-dawning day, yon gleaming lake, the silver windings of the river and its gentle murmurings, the budding branch in the spring-time, and the sad fluttering of red leaves in the autumnal woods, or the very sweet music of the birds who, even now, undeterred by the host and the sights of war, sit and sing in their wonted habitations, where the wood-cutters of the Tân have spared their favourite trees. But this black-bird, whose clear delicious note we hear, is to them but the symbol of martial courage, and no beasts do they praise or love save only the hound and the horse, whom they honour for that the men of Erin delight in the chase and in the works of war."

But her Queen Meave answered :—

"Much indeed, I desire, O wife of Aileel Finn, that the bards of Eiré would sing only of these things, and relinquish to their betters that which concerns princes. But now they must needs be heard in the making and administration of the laws, with close-inspecting and jealous eyes observing all that we do. Let them sing of the wars of cats and rats, and chronicle the wisdom of the black-bird in making his nest, and glorifying the

brightness of his eyes and the redness of his legs, rather than concern themselves with the laws. For truly, my royal brooch avails me little, bound and confined as I am by these men of many words."[1]

Then were all silent, for the great Queen spoke with unpleasing harshness; but ere they could renew their conversation, there approached the sons of Cailitin, and his retinue, and Cailitin,[2] himself, the mighty druid and necromancer, master of magic spells. Proud was he above all others, an admirer of himself, and a contemner of ancient times; nor did he reverence, save in form and word only, the majesty of the noble Queen. Moreover, where he went he attracted to himself honour, and he lessened the honour of dignities, such a spell did he cast over the minds of men. To receive him, all stood attentive, and the High Queen herself rose from her royal throne. Him Glas Mac Dalga, his nephew, informed of what they then conversed, for differences were wont to be referred to him, and not many had the hardihood to dispute the judgment which he pronounced; and he, when he heard it, he discoursed thus with sonōrous ease—

"One day, verily, the bards will forget the works of war, such a spirit, dear to me, is driving them on, whether the mighty Dagda, whom we name the Great Father, or the Mōr Reega, who now presides over wealth and war alike, or Lu Lamfāda, the Sābh Ioldāna, or

[1] The mediæval bards did actually sing of those milder and tamer themes to which Queen Meave desired to relegate them.

[2] For the history of Cailitin and the Clan Cailitin see Keatinge, p. 281. "The great breach of Murthemney," O'Mahony's MSS., T. B. C., p. 205.

mild Angus of the Boyne, or spirits yet more powerful and wise than these, who care for the common weal. For in this wise shall be the coming time. With their laws and regulations, and by means of their far-extended communion, embracing like a net-work all Fohla, and by their insistence upon the fulfilment of contracts, and the just discharge of all duties, the ollavs, though now they sing of war and heroes, will reduce war and bring into disrepute all its works, and there will be wealth and ease, and the labours of craftsmen and of industrious men of all kinds. Then will the singing men hymn the mild and beautiful, and the many fair things which the earth and sky and each changing day bring forth, and chiefly the pleasures of love, and the average daily life of men, when the immense and fierce race of savage heroes shall expire, as in the ancient days expired the race of Partholān and Mac Erc, and the tyrannous clans of the Fōmoroh, whose tombs are scattered over the face of the earth, devastators and lawless men, like the mountains in stature, but who perished utterly before the beautiful sane might of the immortal gods. So, too, shall the heroes, restless and barren as are the waves of the immense ocean, perish before the law-making strength of the bards. That good time I shall not see, nor my sons, but it will surely be."

So spake the great magician, and they, spell-bound, wondered at his wisdom, and longed for the gracious times to be; but him answered Mainey Ahrimail, the stubborn and perverse warrior:—

"Base are the thoughts which thou dost entertain, O Cailitin. In thy swelling presence and great words a vile spirit crawls for all thy wizardry and enchantments.

Too much thou delightest in a clear and spacious palace, and grovelling low to wallow in the midst of thy wealth. We, in our life, imitate the immortal gods of Erin, as they then were when they waged war on the Fir-bolgs and the Fomoroh, whom they overthrew upon the two Moy Turas, and either slew or chased afar into the isles, being no more sane than is right in men of heroic breath, nor more beautiful than is consistent with the manly attributes. I deny thy future, O Cailitin, for out of Eiré the race of heroes shall not, at any time, expire."

So spake the unfearing son of the High Queen, grieving his mother much by the arrogance of his language, for much did she and all the people honour the man whom he had addressed; nevertheless Cailitin was not angered, but laughed scornfully. But after that the wise and sweet-toned bard Bricné, the son of Cairbré, turning to Queen Fleeas thus spake:—

"The poets of Erin, O noble Fleeas, forget not the changing beauty of the day, or the lovely vernal sights and sounds, or the song of birds, such as of this blackbird that now sings above the tent of Mainey Ahrimail, on the crooked bough of the great elm tree. But around each are these sights always extended, and these sounds always heard, but deeds of heroic breath only at times, as they need a chronicler and a historian. Moreover, this is impossible, that one whose soul is immersed in the soft beauty of the world should sustain, unimpaired, the high heroic ardour, the daring and fearlessness and contempt of death which have given to every nation its heroes, and to every clan its divine names, both in old times and now also, men excelling in stature and beauty,

and in heroic bearing and words, the tame small tillers of the soil, the slaves and fudirs[1] of Fohla, who, if they eat and sleep and gender in peace, and die a bloodless death, think that the gods have been most gracious. But the bards of Eiré, who have formed the heroes, breathing into them the divine breath which they have received from their ancestors, and from the gods, forget not at all the fair and lovely sights of each day, nor the sweetness of love, nor the beauty of children and timid beasts, nor are they in their songs left unnoticed. But the divine and the heroic are, as it were, the web of that which they sing, and these things, as it were, the ornamentation which, indeed, all well-natured men and women may, of themselves, supply."

But him Mainey Ahrimail answered :—

"I know not what it may be customary with thee,

[1] The lowest class in society were the slaves, amongst whom ranked, legally and politically, the personal attendants and retinues of the nobles, though personally and socially these latter might rank with the highest. After the slaves come the fudirs, the mere tenants-at-will. The great mass of the farmers were, however, freeholders, whose rents and legal position the bards jealously guarded. A description of the various ranks and classes will be found in Vol. I., p. 245 to 249, the authorities being the Brehon laws, quoted by O'Sullivan and O'Curry. From the reliable testimony of the laws, one can see that even in those remote times the population of Ireland was equal to what it is to-day, and that for the mass of the people the standard of comfort was considerably higher. Not only were the rents for the most part protected by the law, but those rents were again spent in the country. What the country could not produce itself was imported. Tacitus, writing about the year 60 A.D., alludes to the considerable commercial intercourse between Ireland and the Continent, substantiating the testimony of native writers. See O'Curry's Manners and Customs, Vol. I., p. 543, where the poet, describing the fair of Cahirmān, alludes to the quarter which was occupied by foreign merchants.

O son of Cairbré, to call beautiful, and to say that this thing is, indeed, beautiful, but not heroic, and that is heroic, and not beautiful. But I will tell thee what, to me, appears beautiful. When I see Cormac Conlíngas having laid aside his sloth, and his deceptive smiles and words, spring, all armed, into his chariot on the edge of the battle, with his gleaming cath-barr and broad shield, that, indeed, appears a beautiful sight to me, and his battle-shout seems, to me, beautiful, and beautiful his magic spear levelled, when his arm is drawn back to hurl, and the firm muscle of his upper arm stands out from the glistening purple bratta. Or, when I see a battalion of the western Fir-bolgs—even the seed of the giants—running to battle after Ed-Cu Rond, stooped, steady, swift-advancing, keeping time as they run, with white, knotted knees, below their parti-coloured lënas; and when I see in front, the glittering slender spears, and behind the spears, shields, and behind the shields, fearless faces, bright with the blaze of battle, that, to me, appears very beautiful—but this red-legged blackbird, on the tree—"

Thereat, the warrior laughed, and the rest laughed with him.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ENCHANTER.

"What are these
So withered, and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants of the earth,
And yet are on it?"

SHAKESPEARE.

Then said Queen Meave :—

"To us now, at least for a season, the works of peace shall be a care, and the wise ordering of our territories, to which, with thy signal and ever-present aid, O excellent Cailitin, I shall attend straightway, after I have crossed the Shannon and dismissed my tributaries to their own homes; but much, indeed, I marvel how all the prophecies have been falsified by the event of this great foray, for Feithleen, the fairy prophetess, appearing to me in Magh Ai, predicted huge disaster, even gory plains, and Cuculain raging amid the Tàn, but now, unopposed, I have plundered and dispersed on Murthemney the battalions of the Red Branch, and defeated and slain the great son of Sualtam, whom men named 'the life of the Ultonians,' and concerning whom thou, thyself, O Cailitin, didst in private utter many dark and terrible monitions, yet, even thus, and failing here in thy wizard arts, before all others I shall continue to honour thee, and place upon thee my chief dependence and my trust."

So spake the noble Queen, but he, the necromancer

and magician, occupied a place not far removed from the Queen upon the right, sitting—though the others stood—broad-breasted and strong, having the aspect of a king whom no Ard-Rie controlled, but upon his crown there was the blemish of baldness, and of the prophets and seers of the men of Erin, some said that a cold horror ever dwelt around him. So amongst them, like a king, sat the enchanter, and around him stood his twenty-seven sons, who always accompanied him, not sprung from the same mother, for he wandered in his affections, and many women had he led to his house as concubines, some by compulsion and in tears, having gained, with bribes, the consent of their parents, and some willingly, for he was very rich. Splendid, indeed, was his palace, with spacious, beautiful lawns, sloping down to the Shannon, above Loch Derg, on the Olnemacian shore; in his stables were glossy steeds, and in his kennels swift and beautiful hounds, and he had boats of pleasure upon the great Red Lake. But out of the City of Limenick[1] went forth to Gaul and Espân his trading ships, laden with wool and skins, and returned, bearing wine, and silk, and unwrought metal; brass, and iron, and gold. Thence, his great wealth, but he was also an owner of land. Unto the hosting he had come, leading a well-appointed battalion of mercenaries, even the rising-out at which his territory was assessed, for he had no free-hold tenants, only slaves and fudirs. Nor was he himself despicable as a warrior, but sufficiently valiant, and yet not surely to be depended upon in straits. Nevertheless, his strength lay not in his spear, or in the courage of his soldiers, but in his magic

[1] The *n* in this word has since changed into *r*.

power, for he had enchanted weapons, and an evil eye, and he controlled the souls and wills of those who despised him not. And this, too, was a marvel that, though he was himself not despicable as a fighting man, nevertheless all his sons were unfit for war, for some were too corpulent, and some were too thin; and of those who were well-formed, some were cowardly, and others, who were not cowardly, were not reliable. Nevertheless, a magic power resided in each and all, and it was said that to overcome this clan putting forth their might it would require the assistance of the immortal gods. But that one of the women with whom he associated, whom he loved best and longest, was rearing, in his palace by the Shannon, six[1] other children, three male and three female, and these were said to be the most terrible of all. Now, along with the twenty-seven sons who accompanied Cailitin to this war, was the son of his sister, Glas[2] Mac Dalga, a brave youth and a beautiful, whom Cailitin had reared in his palace; and Cailitin admired Glas Mac Dalga; but Glas Mac Dalga admired not nor honoured the magician, nevertheless, he dwelt with him in his spacious palace.

Such was Cailitin, the great druid and enchanter, and thus he replied to the words of the Queen:—

"O mighty Queen of the Olnemacta, ruling with thy invincible spear many nations, of the warnings that reached thee from other sources I know not, but in my prophetic mind surely I have not erred, but through me

[1] For these children, of whom we shall hear again, see "the Great Breach of Murthemney," Royal Irish Academy; also, Death of Cuculain, in *Revue Celtique.*

[2] T. B. C., p. 205.

has been thy salvation and the preservation of the host. For I, or ever we saw him, was aware of the presence of that venomous reptile and raging wolf whom men call Mac Beg and Mac Sualtam, and whom others fable to be of celestial origin and the son of Lu,[1] so early does my mind advise me against evil things. Therefore, I first privately warned thee, O Queen, but thou hadst not then the same trust in me that thou hast now, and I, myself, sent forth against him all my powers of druidism and enchantment. First, I took away from him half his strength, so that he was shorn of his magic attributes and his invincible and destructive prowess which he exercised in the wars of Alba and Man, and when he sacked Cathair[2] Conroi, slaying in his might the son of Dary, whom the southern nations regarded as a god. Moreover, I reduced his stature, and darkened the terrible glory which he was wont to present, and I called to my aid the spirits that enforce the curse of her[3] who died racing against the steeds of Concobar, and I deepened the stupefaction of the Ultonians, and I caused him to be deserted and alone, fighting with casual weapons, and such as he was wont to carry only in times of peace and for custom's sake, and I raised against him the sleeping wrath[4] of the Mŏr Reega, and caused him to contend laboriously and with many wounds. Moreover, I shed over him a magic sorrow, and confounded him so that now, doubtless, somewhere

[1] For the passages relating to this belief, see Crow MSS.

[2] The Fortress of Curoi. Its remains are still extant west of Tralee.

[3] This strange tale is preserved in the MS. Harleian 5280, British Museum. Let us hope it has not mouldered into illegibility.

[4] For the relations between the great war-goddess and Cuculain, see Mr. Hennessey's splendid article in *Revue Celtique.*

the worm eats him, or the children[1] of the soil snarl, as they polish again, with shining teeth, his abominable bones. These services have I done for thee, O Queen of the Olnemacta; therefore, upbraid me not that I warned thee in vain, lest I desert thee for ever."

So spake fierce Cailitin, the enchanter, to the fear-stricken Queen, and his sons spake in like manner, but more fierce, for they thought in all things with their mighty sire, hating with his hatred, and boasting with his vain-glory, and fearing with his fear. But Glas Mac Dalga remained silent, for he was much an admirer of Cuculain. Yet, as the druid spake, many felt their minds harden against the memory of Cuculain, even those who had been sometime his friends. Only Cormac Conlingas, over whom he had no power, thus replied, inly scorning the magician:—

"Once indeed, O mighty Cailitin, I thought the son of Sualtam noble and beautiful to look upon, eloquent, too, for a warrior, and graceful; but now, hearing and seeing thee and thy sons, I have been disenchanted. To me he seems as thou hast said, a venomous reptile and a raging wolf; but in thyself, O Cailitin, and in these thy matchless progeny, may be recognised the true type of manly beauty, and, methinks, that until now I have not heard any orator discourse so eloquently, or with such a temperate dignity. But, I prithee, O Cailitin, tell me whence arises this thy bitter hatred, against Cuculain Mac Sualtam."

So spake the son of Concobar, gazing upon that unlovely crew, but him Cailitin answered:—

"O noble and gracious prince, as thou knowest, my

[1] Wolves. Similarly, in Irish, Echo is the son of the Cliff.

race is not native to the soil, though here it hath struck a deep and wide root, but from the Torrian sea have we come, passing through Espân and the country of the Gauls, and here we were, at first, plebeian, but in other lands our race is imperial, having great power and honour, and those who receive us live in peace and plenty, but those who receive us not, in hardship, and strife, and much labour. To me, my father dying in the City of Limenick,[1] and honoured highly by the merchants and burgesses thereof, prophesied concerning this youth, describing him clearly as though with his eyes he beheld him, and he said that he, and such as he, were the deadly enemy of all our race, and that between him and us there could be no truce, any more than between the fierce forest-roaming wolf and the gentle and fleece-producing sheep, and that it was fated that I should destroy him, or he me. Yet, not the solemn warning of my excellent father did I require, for I felt his abhorréd presence even then, when he went before us in his chariot, and all the powers of my nature embattled themselves against him, and sent forth all their choicest influences against him to destroy him. They say, indeed, that the high gods of Erin are on his side, but I, too, have invincible spirits that succour me. Therefore, even in the grave do I abominate him, and therefore his name and fame are to me an evil odour, and his memory as an ulcerous rankling sore. Upon his tomb would I heap all unclean things, and I would wage war even against his ghost."

But as he spake, his sons, too, raged around him, foaming forth fierce words against the son of Sualtam;

[1] Limerick.

and all those over whom their magic power was not extended, shuddered when they beheld the wrath of the Clan Cailitin.

Then, one looking eastward, said :—

"Methinks I see Fergus Mac Roy afar off, approaching."

Thereat Cailitin and the Clan Cailitin arose, and went away to where was their own quarter, and before him and after him went his guards, strong, resolute mercenaries, whom he had hired out of all the provinces of Erin, and from foreign lands.

Then, for a space there was silence, till was heard the sweet-toned voice of Queen Fleeas :—

"Methinks till now I never beheld the sun descend amid clouds so flaming red. Truly, to me, he seems no longer like a monarch of the sky, attired in crimson robes, but like a blood-stained warrior, weltering in fields of gore, as he swoons westward into the country of the Olnemacta."

And Queen Meave said :—

"What magic stillness is this that cleaves around the camp like a shroud around the dead, so that our voices sound distant and terrible? I hear not the lowing of the cattle or the bleating of sheep, and my squirrel crouches trembling in the grass, as though beneath a hovering eagle, and but now I heard, as it were, the voice of a dove addressing me, and it said, 'I foresee bloodshed; I foresee power. Cumascrah is no longer under fear in his island, nor Kelkar at Dûn Sovarchey, nor Concobar at Emain Macha, nor Lægairé in his own land, nor Conaill in Mæl Conaill.' Is it thou, O Faythleen,[1] O fairy prophetess of Temairian hills."

[1] Compare p. 8 with p. 16 T. C. B.

Then sounded hard by the Barr-buah of the Tân, the trumpet-blast of the battle-array of the four provinces, and afar throughout the camp responded the call of the wind instruments of every sept and nation, summoning the warriors to arms, and Fergus himself stood before the Queen, and sternly dismissed the attending kings.

Thereat started forth Queen Meave and cried:—

"What are these trumpet-calls of preparation, what panic is this that arises from thee and around thee? What commands are these that thou sendest forth not enjoined by me, and this low hoarse swelling note is it of mutiny or of war? Appease thou the host, O Fergus, for I know not which way to look, but all my mind is confused."

And Fergus said:—

"Fear not, O Queen, and regard not, for a space, the note of arms. But fear thou to give any commands, or to countenance those who may resist me. Henceforth, the warriors of the Tân shall not peacefully divide the booty, eat flesh, and drink ale exulting, but stern war awaits them, and the combat of heroes. Ned shall be the prince of their feasting, and the croaking of bauvs[1] their pleasant music, for the Red Branch of the Ultonians draweth nigh, fierce as the she-bear following through the forest the track of the hunter carrying in his hands her ravished offspring. Stand here, O wife of Aileel Môr; seest thou aught yonder above the dark green forest that to the north of this plain stretches from the east westwards?"[2]

[1] Gælicé "badb."

[2] For what follows, see T. B. C., p. 330 et circa.

CHAPTER XIV.

DESCENT OF THE RED BRANCH.

"Though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with the heroic race were joined
That fought at Thebes, or Ilium, on each side,
Mixed with auxiliar gods; or what resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son,
Begirt with British and Armoric knights."

"Their visages and stature as of gods."

MILTON.

Then Queen Meave answered and said:—

"I see indeed a confused multitude of flying birds of every kind, small and great, flying thitherward as though terrified, from beyond the forest, and they break to the right hand and the left, but some fly towards us, and over us, and they seem to me like sea-birds which flee before an ocean-racking tempest when on the horizon, yet still, and against a clear sky they, with redoubled speed, are seen fleeing shorewards, or to the islands and the sheltering recesses of the crannied lofty rocks."

"And now that these have passed away, borne swiftly on panic-stricken wings, seest thou yet aught, O High Queen of the Olnemacta," said Fergus gazing, as he spake, upon the bright-eyed forward-bending Queen.

"Northward, beyond the dark forest, I behold a vision, lovely indeed and beautiful to look upon, and like a work raised by magic power, serene and fair; a soft, white, delicate mist, like most pure wool many times

refined; or like fairy snow shed afar over the land; or like the very white upper clouds of heaven unmoved against the blue canopy of the stainless sky. Moreover, from its level floor, as from the face of some beautiful lough, there arise, as it were, tufted isles, with that white soft sea poured around their base, and never, O Fergus, have I a sight more beautiful beheld."

"Make keener now thy far-seeing eyes, O wife of Aileel, and tell me what thou seest."

"That so serene and still, seems to me, so now no longer, but still with the stillness of some intense and endless life, for within there appears, to me, to exist a rush, and movement, and commotion, to be felt more than seen. Moreover, I now distinguish innumerable faint twinklings as of stars in the gloaming of the night, and quick sudden flashings, and rapid fires that burn and go out, and are illumed and extinguished, and cross one another's paths through all that snow-like fairy mist, also spots of blackness that move in curved ways and cease not."

"And now, O mistress of many warriors, in this silence of thy own host, already divided into regiments and nations, which stand armed and expectant, hearest thou aught from that far distance, O sovereign of the Tân?"

"I hear a vast confused hum like the murmur of some gigantic hive, when in the spring-time there is a noise of preparation amongst its populous youth, an endless roar like the far away roaring of the sea, when in the still moony night its long waves roll up some vast unbroken sand, and I hear, or hardly hear, voices as of gods or giant heroes, and a faint ringing as of brass

amid that mysterious mist, and now more clearly I distinguish the flashings, and the stars, and the rapid fires. Amid the mist there is the beckoning of a gigantic hand, blood-red, and around it, as it were, lightnings. It is the Fŏmoroh, or the people of Mac Erc, raised by sorcerers from their tombs, or the high gods of Erin descending visibly out of Tir-na-n-ōg, and the realms of the dead. Stay me not, thou false son of Rossa[1] Roe; take from me thy strong hands, I shall not here await the blasting of the .great children of the ancient Nemedh."

For the great Queen, trembling, had screamed in her terror, and was hastening to the inner recesses of her pavilion to the shelter of darkness and secrecy, and the protection of her idol-gods.[2] But her Fergus forcibly detained, soothing her terror-stricken soul, and he said:

"Fear not, O mighty Queen, whom spears a hundred thousand defend, and the flower of the warriors of the four great provinces of Eiré. What unwarlike panic is this of thine, O mighty sovereign of the Tân—thou, who art the battle-standard of our warriors. It is not the ancient gods of Erin, nor yet the victorious and mighty children of Dana, but men of mortal frame like ourselves whom, when spears pierce through, they perish, and the flame consumes them, or the dark earth enfolds for ever. Yet truly, O my Queen, not with vain-glorious confidence ought we to meet those warriors

[1] This Rossa Roe was the son of Rury, founder of the Clanna Rury. Fergus was surnamed Mac Roy from his mother.

[2] These were also called hand-gods. The small sacred pebble, of which we often read, were, doubtless, of this nature, *i.e.*, fetishes. See history of Kesair in Crowe MSS.

who come down against us out of the north, concealed in that phantom mist, for champions, the noblest and greatest beheld by the all-seeing sun, march hitherwards in its fairy folds. It is the children of Rury whom thou seest; the giants of the north, collected afar out of their fortresses and their palaces palisaded and trenched from the Red[1] Cataract in the west to the Ictian[2] sea; heroic champions who fear naught created; the gathered might of the great Red Branch of the Ultonians, led on by that proud ruthless monarch of Emain. For, as for that white fairy mist with which, like a fleece of purest wool, thou hast seen the land enwrapt, it is the breath of the valiant, and the steam of the breathing of the mighty men of Ulla, and of their gigantic steeds inhaling the sun and wind into their lungs, and expelling it again in steam, and the steam of the sweat of heroes, and from the wet, foamed sides of horses as they run, and owing to their distress in running, and above them, in the still air, it hangs suspended, and they are concealed in its folds. And this is that white fairy mist which thou hast seen.

"And the tufted isles which thou likenedst to the isles that rise from the face of some still gleaming lake —these are the peaks of the northern hills and the tops of the mountain ranges of the north, standing above the suspended steam of their host. Such are those tufted isles, and such the white sea that encircles their base.

"And the lights like quick-glancing stars, the moving fires and flashes of sharp flame—they are the shining

[1] Assaroe, near Ballyshannon.

[2] The sea between England and Ireland.

of innumerable helmets with their gemlike decorations, the burnished rims of chariots, and the extremities of the poles glittering between the breasts of steeds, and the burning points of spears, and the faces of the moving shields, and the eyes of their innumerable warriors bright with the light of valour, these are those starry twinklings, flashes, and rapid flames. And those swart spots moving in curved ways are the clods cast from the swift hoofs of their galloping steeds, which escape the dash-board of the chariot, and are flung aloft behind the warrior and the charioteer, as their youthful chivalry career, to the right and the left, in front of the host, exulting in their swiftness and might, or gallop forward and await the running ranks of the spearmen.[1]

"And now, O Queen, thou knowest what is that confused roar like the roaring of the sea, for it is the noise of the movement of the host, the screech of innumerable wheels revolving on their brazen axles, and the sound of the tread of the warriors and the trampling of the hoofs of horses, the converse of the host as they march, and the war songs of the tribes, expressing their warlike glee as they march, singing, with open mouths, sonōrous songs. And as for those more distinct sounds, it is the shouting of mighty captains, and the roar of the bellowing of gigantic kings, far-strident amid the din, when they shout among their nations, and divide the ordered ranks and the squadrons of the chariot-fighting chivalry, and the clash of spears upon hollow-ringing shields, when some mighty clan responds to its captain, or gives vent to its own warlike glee."

[1] This feature in battles and racing grounds seems to have had a great charm for the Irish bards. It is very often alluded to.

"And as for that red hand, like lurid flame seen afar through the smoke of a burning dûn, it is the Red Hand of Emain Macha, the warlike symbol of the North. It has been woven by immortal hands in a banner white as snow; and now for the first time has that banner been brought forth to war, nor shall it ever be seen in battle again any more to the end of time, and around it then are portents, the shrieking of bauvs and battle-furies; the wives of Ned [1] are there, and the spirits that delight in carnage, and dreadful faces, and the flashing of lightnings. And worthy, indeed, of divine presences are those warriors, for they are such as never yet have been collected in Erin since the days of old, when, at Moy Tura, gods with giants contended for the sovereignty of Fail. The Mŏr Reega is there, too, far-striding in their midst, and there Lewy, King of Ultonian Fir-bolgs, and the Clan Humŏr[2] with the Fir-bolgs of the isles."

Then far-off beyond the forest appeared distinctly the mighty host of the Clanna Rury, and men saw the northern terror extending from the east westward, the gigantic spearmen and war horses, the flashing chariots and weapons, and the whole face of the land was lightened with their glory. Then Meave rejoiced, seeing the great intervening forest, saying that the Ultonians would make a huge circuit; but even while she spake,

[1] Fea and Nemen, see *Revue Celtique*, p. 39, Vol. I.

[2] This nation claimed to have descended from those Fir-bolgs whom, on Moy Tura, the gods overthrew, but who had escaped slavery by exile. Their return to Erin now bears some resemblance to the return of the Heracleidæ in Grecian History, except that the latter involves a purely legendary conception.

there arose a crash, and a noise of a continual down-rushing, and black chasms were seen in the forest, pale under the light of stars. And Queen Meave said:—

"What is this crash, and this noise of continual down-rushing, and this agitation of the forest, and the black valleys therein which I see?"

And Fergus said:—

"It is the noise of the felling of forest trees, where the mighty men of Ulla hew roads through the forest for the passage of their chariots."

But while he spake, there appeared on the plain northward, in front of the forest, the huge forms of armed men, where the spearmen and footmen of the Clanna Rury, having passed through the forest, were emerging on the star-lit plain. Then shouted the men of Meave, and the Northern host shouted in reply, and the starry firmament rang with that roar of the heroes of Eiré.

That night the host of Concobar Mac Nessa encamped on the edge of the forest, and the plain northwards was bright with their innumerable fires.

CHAPTER XV.

CHIEFS OF THE RED BRANCH.

"Thus far these beyond
Compare of mortal prowess, yet observed
Their dread commander."

MILTON.

THROUGH the night the bright stars glowed in heaven, and the red fires burned upon earth, and these dimmed and went out, and those paled around the paling moon, and the sacred morning lightened the east. Then awaked the great host of Meave, and far and wide there was a noise of arms and of preparation for the coming strife. But when Queen Meave came forth from her tent, surrounded by her guard, and approached her war-car, the whole host was in battle-array, and the great Queen looked in amazement and wonder at the glittering lines of the Clanna Rury and their excelling champions, and thus she questioned Fergus Mac Roy, though at first she was silent and panic-stricken, and her pale countenance grew paler:—

"O Fergus, who is that mighty champion who stands on the summit of the green knoll, in the centre of their line of battle? Like a star he glitters in the midst of his men of war. He wears, indeed, the beard of a learned man; but methinks his vocation is other than to compose lays, such an arm spear-bearing does he extend, giving orders to many chariot-guiding youths,

who pass swiftly to and from the knoll. On his mighty shield methinks I see the likeness of a woman[1] painted, and around him are heroines with harps, singing. A purple bratta, fastened with a golden brooch, surrounds his shoulders, and a great battle-axe, glittering with gold, is at his girdle. To me he seems like a royal tower, clear seen upon some tall hill."[2]

Her Fergus Mac Roy answered not at first, but kept gazing afar, and when he spake, his voice was hoarse and broken.

"Full well I know thee, bright, treacherous monarch of Emain. A star, indeed; but like that sworded star which the high gods draw in heaven, when, with war and pestilence, they will scourge the nations of Eiré."

And Cormac Conlingas said:—

"Thou seest the chief of the chieftains of the whole earth. It is my great father, Concobar, son of Factna, son of Cas, Ard-Rie of all Ulla. Years have not marred his countenance, which is fresh and ruddy, nor his mind —for he is mild, and courteous, and keen-thoughted, and eager, nor brought down his courage, for, through our host, he will pass with the strength of a battalion, and terribly beneath their black lashes will blaze his fearless eyes.[3] That shield is the Magic Amulet,[4] renowned in the songs of the bards of Eiré. Within it dwells a spirit, and a voice cries from it to warn him,

[1] Tiobal, a marine goddess, Pub. Oss. So.

[2] For description of Concobar, see T. C. B., p. 324; also M. and C. Passim, reading from the Index.

[3] T. B. C., 324. His eyes, dark-blue. In History of Deirdré, Publications of Gælic Society, p. 19, his voice is described as regal and awful.

[4] This was the Eochuin.

and the three royal waves respond. At the slaughter of the sons of Usna I heard it, and after it the roaring of the sea."[1]

But Queen Meave wondered at the great Ard-Riè, and said :—

"Once, indeed, I beheld him when he was a boy, for he came to Temair with his father, and my father and his then betrothed us to one another. At him the far-coming kings wondered, both on account of his beauty, and because he loved not our pleasures, but went to and fro among the cairns and the tombs of the men of old, and the armour and weapons of ancient heroes preserved in our halls, listening greedily to every lying tale of the bards and antiquaries of Temair. But prithee, O Fergus, if thou wilt reply, who is that great warrior coming from the west, and with him a cohort of chariot-riding chivalry? On foot now he approaches the knoll, and with him two noble boys. Half of this spear would not measure his broad shoulders. A crimson, silken bratta he wears, over which his dense hair rolls bright as refined gold that boils over the edge of the refiner's crucible, and he stoops somewhat in his gait. I would say that he was slothful, but now aroused, and his soul possessed with some great wrath."[2]

[1] See "History of Deirdré," p. 97. The waves were the Tonn Tuaithé, and the Tonn Clidna, and the Tonn Rury. Conaill Carna was at Dun Sovarchy, and he heard the Tonn Tuaithé. "Truly," said Conaill, "Concobar is in peril, and it is not meet that I should remain listening." When Conn of the Hundred Fights was in similar jeopardy, the sea roared at these points: Tonn Tuaithé = Mouth of the Bann, Tonn Clidna = Glandore, Co. Cork, Tonn Rury = Bay of Dundrum, Co. Down.

[2] See Bruidin Daderga Crowe MSS.

And Fergus said:—

"It is Conaill the Victorious, son of that Amargin whom we drave from the plains of Murthemney; but not with ease would the rising-out of a territory drive that single hero before them; and now he is awake and angry on account of the slaying of Cuculain, for they made a vow with one another after this fashion. Said yon hero, 'Thee slain, O Setanta, the sun shall not set before I have avenged thee;' but Cuculain said, 'Thy blood shall not be cold upon the earth ere I shall have taken vengeance for thee;'[1] and at this, too, is he wroth, namely, that he has left that vow unfulfilled. Like a rock is he stedfast within his armour, and he is lord of all the arts of poison,[2] and of war."

And Cormac Conlingas said:—

"The women of Ulla go with round shoulders, stooping,[3] for his love. His countenance the bards of Ulla commend as the fairest in all Eiré. With one eye[4] he looks amorousness, and with the other murder. Those with him are his two sons, Leix Land-Mōr and Euryal Glun-mār."

Then said Queen Meave:—

"This, indeed, is a most renowned champion. Once[5] he came to Rath Crushane, and he overcame all my household at throwing of the wheel, but Cuculain doubled his

[1] See "Great breach of Murthemney."

[2] See T. B.C. circa, p. 335. Poison stands here for magic.

[3] For this blemish, see "Sick bed of Cuculain," New Atlantis.

[4] One eye was black, the other blue, see M. & C., p. 140, Vol. III. It is strange that Victor Hugo, in his description of the Duchess Josiana, which he intends to be an ideal of physical beauty, attributes to her this same characteristic.

[5] "Feast of Bricrind," Crowe MSS.

cast. Then I saw him not, for I lay in my chamber weak after the birth of Measa, and I directed a goblet of silver to be given unto him. He it was who brake that great battle upon the Leinstermen at Ben Edar, and chased Mesgœra across the Liffey, whom he slew at the Ford of Clæn. Him, too, once at Mac Datho's feast,[1] I beheld when he insulted the Olnemacta, crying aloud with a fierce laugh, 'To you the legs, seeing that they have been at all times your salvation.' Before him then we fled to the Shannon, and he went slaughtering our broken rear through Mid-Erin. Surely, Fergus, thou didst wisely to withstand the departure of the hosts of the Kings of Munster. Look now westward, O Fergus. Who is that noble champion, tall, and of a most knightly bearing, who stands in the midst of his men of war, where the Brosna issues silver-bright from the dark wood? In his hand he holds a long broad-bladed spear, and his bratta is mixed purple and yellow."[2]

And Fergus said :—

"I know him well, Lægairé, son of Cónud, son of Iliach, son of Cas, son of Rury. Chivalrous and noble is that champion. None have ever foiled him, and upon him no defeat was ever at any time followed up. Like a great rock, which lays waste a forest on the steep hillside, will be his passage through our hosts. Well I know thee in peace and war, Lægairé of the Red Victorious Helmet. Bravest he of the Red Branch after the great son of Amargin."

And Queen Meave said :—

"To him I directed that there should be given a

[1] MS. Materials, p. 487. [2] T. B. C., p. 330.

goblet of brass, for he was the worst of them. Nevertheless, to my people, he seemed to have the strength of a god until the son of Amargin stripped for the contest, and at him, in turn, they wondered exceedingly until his cast was doubled by Cuculain ; and, nevertheless, they two deemed themselves to be the guardians and protectors of Cuculain."

And so Queen Meave, her fear lost in wonder and awe, kept questioning the exiles concerning the great chieftains of the northern host—godlike heroes and champions, whom dying their giant tombs did not all receive, for they left their glory in the air and their memory in the minds of men. Kelkar, the great son of Uther, his broad breast hidden by the Gate of Battle ;[1] Owen, son of Durthect, cunning, brave, and most ruthless ;[2] Cumascra Mend Macha, stammeringly eloquent, the heroic son of Concobar ; Meann, old and unmerciful; Girgend, father of a beautiful daughter ; Mainey Minremär, at whom Inkel wondered on the banks of the Dodder ; Shanka, the broad-browed orator ; Rōka Mac Athemain, whom the Ultonians welcomed not, nor censured ; Fergus, king of Rathlin ; Condera, of the Dark Red Shield, and Nuada, of the Candle, and many more renowned in chronicle and song, the flower of the Red Branch when, in that warlike age, like a full wave broken, the swelling might of the Clanna Rury rolled over and shed itself with a noise of battle, and the shining of heroic deeds, too long forgotten, but not destined for ever to be oblivion's prey.

[1] Comla Catha.

[2] It was he who slew the children of Usna. The reader who desires to learn more of these characters will have recourse to the Index of the M. and C., and to such of the existing historical tales as are still preserved.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

"It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears."

KEATS.

"Did ye not hear it? No. 'Twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street."

BYRON.

NIGHT upon the plain of the great battle of Gaura, beyond the Brosna, eastward in Teffia, a plain of death, a plain of suffering and of woe. There gashed battle-belts and protruding bowels, there blue-black discoloured faces, and hands hacked upon the back, chariots overturned and broken, and maimed noble steeds, that struggled in vain to rise and brake again the broken war-car, and from the plain a many-voiced agony went up into the night. To and fro passed warriors coming out of either camp, and they separated the living from the dead, and these, one by one, they conveyed to the booths of the quarters of the physicians. All over the plain moved the red torches, and the men of Meave were not prevented by the Ultonians, nor the Ultonians by the men of Meave.[1] The Four Provinces brought back their wounded with ease, but the Ultonians with difficulty,

[1] Meave careful of her wounded, T. B. C., 317. The source of the mercy usually attributed to the chiefs of the heroic age of Ireland was not so much humanity as pride and chivalrous magnanimity.

for of them, the whole that night were not more numerous than the wounded, and their dead more than the wounded of the men of Meave.[1]

In the pavilion of the king of Ulla, silence and a dim light, sorrowful and obscure; and all through the vast chamber gigantic shapes of heroes crouched, or standing, outstretched, or that leaned against the walls—but all, whether they crouched or stood, or on the ground lay, or against the walls leaned, without motion and without sound. To and fro, wordless and slow, went their attending knights, as through some dark temple aisle silent might move the priests passing between the lofty statues of the gods. So through that chamber passed the attending knights of those mighty champions of the Clanna Rury. Beside each hero they set meat and ale, on flaxen cloths upon the ground, and returned again to the dark end of the chamber, but the heroes moved not, the food lay untasted, and the ale undrunk.

At the upper end of the chamber, behind whom burned the flame of a single candle, stood the son of Factna, Concobar Mac Nessa, the great monarch of the Red Branch, his royal bratta, a rag, with the brooch twisted round upon his left shoulder, pierced and torn in the stress of battle, his face and beard besoiled with dust and blood, but kingly, though woe-stricken, looked out his marvellous eyes. So stood the High King, like a picture. His regal form seemed to fill the whole of the upper end of the chamber. With uplifted hands, red as though they had been dipped in the dyeing vat, and white arms dabbled with blood, he held before him, the haft upon the ground, a long spear. The blood still

[1] Ultonians defeated by Meave, T. B. C., 347.

trickled from the point down the spear-tree and over his great hands. On his left arm, still strapped, was the vast rondure of Eochuin, the many-storied shield. So stood the monarch of the north, and he seemed as though he had ceased speaking, and that no man answered him, nor had he wherewithal to answer himself.

Beside him, on the right, sat Conaill, son of Amargin, his face concealed, for his head was buried in his hands. But not easy was it to mistake for another the great son of Amargin, such were his mighty shoulders, and such the glitter and abundance of his warlike tresses. At his feet, like hounds, lay his heroic sons. From the eyes of Leix Land-Mŏr flowed tears of bitter shame, but Euryal Glun-măr sobbed convulsively, rolling upon the ground.

On the other side of the high king stood Lægairé, son of Cónud, not now Triumphant; with one knee crook'd, he stood, and from a pale countenance his dark eyes looked forth fiercely as though, even then in thought, he beheld the foe. In his right hand was still grasped his battalion-severing sword unsheathed, and from it blood was still dripping.[1]

Also, beside Concobar, on the right between him and Conaill, stood a youth whom, amongst those three mighty men one might not at first observe, but of a most noble haviour and countenance. Of royal silk was his torn bratta, and red circles ran round the circumference of his black shield. Lewy, surnamed Rievenerg,[2] was this youth, the grand-son of Yeoha Feidleeah, Ard-Rie of all Ireland.

Svae these one might not at first perceive the Clanna

[1] See T. B. C., p. 330. [2] M. and C., Vol. II., p. 367.

Rury; but, slowly, motionless vast shapes take form throughout the wide pavilion. Fifty-four one might count, beginning from Concobar, of whom the least was a giant.

Into that chamber of woe and shame came from afar the noise of shouting, hardly heard for the distance and for the sound of the wind around that rough tree-built pavilion; and it seemed as though some vast unseen blade share through the hearts of the Clanna Rury, so shuddered those mighty warriors, but with a shuddering to be felt more than seen—so swept through their spirits the swift shame, hearing that far-off shout, and the exultation of the Four Provinces.

Three times that day Concobar Mac Nessa had entered the camp of Meave; three times the son of Amargin swept the Olnemacta before him; three times the red helmet of Lægairé blazed among the tents and streets of the great encampment of the Four Provinces. But this was ere mid-day; and with all the westering sun, the Ultonians gave ground, and the Olnemacta and the Clan Dĕga routed them across the plain, and Cet spread havoc where'er through their yielding ranks he rushed. Hardly after the descent of black night did they desist, saying that they would make an end of the great Red Branch of the Ultonians; for like the shore beneath the successive billows of a rising tide, so disappeared the Clanna Rury before the onrushing of the joined clans of the Four Provinces. And now, indeed, all hope was taken away. Amongst them an unbidden guest, grim Death, sat, too, and shame and despair filled every heart.

Then to them so sitting, there sounded, above the howling of the wind, a faint and distant tinkling as of

the bells of sheep or kine wending homewards at eventide across the lea, and it ceased, and again waxed louder. The rest marked it not; but that youth who sat between Concobar Mac Nessa and the son of Amargin, sprang upon his feet with a cry.

In the camp[1] of the men of Meave, exultation and feasting, the slaughter of sheep and of beeves. In the street and open places blazed the innumerable fires—far flew the sparks on the wild wind, and between the fires passed the mighty men of Meave, or stretching before them caroused. In every pavilion and tent there was a sound of revelry and joyful music, and the light streamed forth through the rudely-woven walls, where the chiefs, and captains, and the nobles of the host of Meave exulted over the conquest of the Ultonians, and the Northern terror brought down to the ground.

Nevertheless, Cailitin and Clan Cailitin feasted not that night; and as for his tent, there was darkness in it and around it, and men escaped gladly from the quarter of the Clan Cailitin into the cheerful fire-litten spaces of the camp that rang with the noise of revelry, and they said that they had heard strange sounds there, and seen abominable forms. And of the warriors, some laughed at the words of the tale-bearers, and others, and these the most numerous, reproved them, praising the great Cailitin, but others, trembling, were silent.

That night Queen Meave boasted mightily concerning the wisdom of her dispositions and the timely commands which she had issued through her captain. And these

[1] For the description of the making of a camp, see "Battle of Moy Leana," p. 75.

things all joyfully acknowledged, such a spell did she cast over the minds of men.

It was about the space of four hours after the night had fallen, that the sentinels of Queen Meave, sitting in their chariots far out upon the plain, heard the faint far ringing, which was heard also by the chiefs of the Clanna Rury, but they marked it not. Nevertheless, ere long in the eastern quarter of the Ultonians, where were the Clans of Murthemney, there arose a shout as of a host of unconquered warriors whose hearts are whole in their breast, and their minds filled with war-like glee. So shouted that ruined remnant of the descendants of Fuad and Murthemney,[1] till it echoed against the solid canopy of the sky, nor ceased, but the cry went westward into the quarter of Fergus Mac Lēda, and then again westward like a swift flame, until it arose from the whole Ultonian camp, and then it died away, and arose once again in a heaven-ascending shout, such as no man in the camp of Meave ever heard before—a shout as of a host, to whom some great and unhoped-for joy has arisen. And Queen Meave and her counsellors were greatly perplexed therefōre.

That night, too, Queen Fleeas consulted her soothsayer, and he having drunk that sacred draught, which was prepared by the druids, and having been laid asleep, with the noise of incantations and druidic song, dreamed, and awaking, said that in a vision he beheld a great mountain-range, dark, but upon which, as it were, day dawned, and that, not the sun arose over its peaks, but a gigantic

[1] These were ancient kings who shared in the Milesian invasion. The former gave his name to Slieve Fuad, now the Fews, Co. Armagh, the latter to that territory of which Cuculain was king, now Co. Louth. See Keating, under head of the Milesian invasion.

hound,[1] white like snow, around whom, as he went, the night lightened, and he coursed over land and seas, and at the voice of his baying, nations trembled, and that after him there ran the likeness of a giant armed for battle, whose bratta, upon the wind, roared like flame, and that the trampling of his feet over the land was like thunder, and the earth quaked as he ran, and that around him there were flying forms.

And the druids hearing him said, "Surely there is some great work toward in Erin, seeing that Lu Mac Æthleen is this night coming up out of Fairyland.

CHAPTER XVII.

NOT YET.

"O thou sole splendour, sprung to vindicate
Night's ancient fame, thou in dread strife serene,
With back-blown locks joyous, yet desperate,
Flamest! from whose pure ardour earth doth win
High passionate pangs, thou radiant paladin."

E. DOWDEN.

Now as the night grew towards dawn, the men of Meave, looking northwards, beheld how that the Ultonians had not fled away during the night, and they saw how, in front of their camp, there had been raised an immense rampart, like a bended bow, the horns resting on the

[1] This was that hound which the sons Turann brought into Erin for Lu Lamfada, see "Death of Children of Turann," New Atlantis. There are various other allusions to him in the heroic literature. Lu was the patron deity of Cuculain. For the mode of consulting the sooth-sayer, see O'Curry's "Chapters on Druidism" in the M. and C.

forest, and that it was pierced with gates, and defended with a foss. Then were the men of Meave glad, for they said that they would utterly destroy the Red Branch, and quench for ever the war-like torch of the children of Rury, and that no resurgance of that proud race would be possible any more to the end of time.

But when the day was fully come, through all the gates there poured forth the battalions of the Clanna Rury, under their captains, the spearmen and chariot-fighting chivalry of the North, and formed upon the plain in sight of the men of Meave.

Then, against the remnant of the Ultonians advanced the mighty host of the Four Provinces of Erin, the exiles on the right wing, and the Clan Dēga on the left, and in the centre the nations of the Olnemacta, amongst whom went on the great Queen, standing erect in her chariot, attired like a man of war, bearing spear and shield, and from afar the ends of the host beheld, above the heads of her warriors, the sheen of her burnished cath-barr. Before her went the seven Maineys, and on the left the huge warriors of Moyrisk, Cet and his invincible brethren, and on her right hand the battalions of Fergus Mac Roy, led on by his heroic sons. Beneath their feet the ground trembled as the great host went on, gathering in from the wings as they went.

Now, Aileel Mōr sat upon a throne of red yew, upon a knoll in front of the camp of the Four Provinces. Around him was a battalion of the household troops of Rath Cruhane, and on his right hand stood Fer-lōga,[1] his very faithful attendant and charioteer. The eyes of the aged king were dimmed, and to him Fer-lōga described

[1] T. B. C., 353.

accurately all the changing phases of that great strife. In his hand the high king held the silver staff of his ancient sovereignty. Nay-the-less, at all times the little finger of the Queen was stronger to govern men than the sceptre of her lord.

Then said Aileel to his attendant :—

"What great champions of the Clanna Rury, yet unhurt, await our onset this day, O Fer-lōga ?"

And Fer-lōga said :—

"I see, indeed, Concobar Mac Nessa, standing rearward, and from him, like sparks from a flame, there shoot forth, on every side, swift-travelling war-cars and fiery youths into every part of the host, and I see the great son of Amargin—well, indeed, might the men of Meave remember him, and that terrible shield which the Ultonians call Lam-tapa. Three times yesterday that baleful symbol burned amid the streets of our camp. Also, I see the shield of Lægairé, son of Cónud, that other pillar of the sovereignty of Concobar. Cumascra Mend Macha is unwounded ; the Gate of Battle, too, I behold, and the Skia-Arglann,[1] and that fierce boy who led forth a battalion of the battalions of Temair."

"But seest thou none, O Fer-lōga, who was not yesterday in the battle ; for surely it was not for some lesser champion that the Ultonians raised, ere midnight, that mighty shout ?"

"There is no new champion in their host, O monarch of the Olnemacta. Nevertheless, I perceive one huge warrior, tall and stooping somewhat, who moves fiercely and restlessly around the camp, within the rampart, and I think that I have seen him ere this, and that he some-

[1] Of Shencha, the orator.

time occasioned mirth and quarrelling also, but I cannot clearly remember. Nevertheless, I am conscious of a certain fear as I look upon that hero. Yet, to me, he appears not about to enter into the battle this day."

Then said Aileel, hearing the shock of the contending hosts and the loud cries :—

"How fares the battle now, O Fer-lōga?"

And Fer-lōga said :—

"Truly it is not an easy thing to quench the torch of valour of the Ultonians. Our host gives back before them, save only where fight the Clans of Moyrisk."

And Aileel Mōr answered :—

"O, that now I had those strong limbs and that warlike spirit which once were mine, when my mother sent me forth out of Moyrisk as an ally to the ally[1] of the high king of Erin. Many fierce and great champions then I slew, and with difficulty could I repeat even their names."

And Fer-lōga said :—

"Great, indeed, was thy career, and renowned amongst the historians of the Olnemacta, and quickly wouldst thou then have repelled the onset of the son of Amargin, before whom Cathīr, son of Eterskel, and the Clan Dēga keep perpetually retreating."

Then, after a space, Fer-lōga and the guards of the king shouted, and Aileel asked the reason of that shout, to whom Fer-lōga replied :—

"Cet and thy maternal[2] clans have pierced the centre of the battle of the Ultonians, and already there their

[1] This was Thinné, with whom, as an ally, Yeoha the Melancholy, extended his authority over the country west of the Shannon.

[2] The children of Māga of Moyrisk.

chariots are rolled back into the foss, and their spear-men are mingled with their chivalry, and their steadfast bands are confused. Go back, son of Uther, cried Fer-lōga, now at last go back. Thou art not Cuculain."

And again said Fer-lōga:—

"Our host is poured around the horns of their battle, and seek to cut off their retreat to the embankment, and in the centre thy sons and the battalion of Fergus burst between the main army and their retreat. Moreover, further north, Cormac Cōnlîngas hath pierced their line where fight the clans of the great son of Lēda; at many points our warriors press forward that they may secure the gates, and the Ultonians themselves also fall back. Like arrows from a bow, Fergus Mac Roy lets loose perpetually swift squadrons of chariots, or strong rapid battalions of spearmen, where their line is broken, that they may pierce through and hold the gates.

"Nevertheless," said Fer-lōga, "before the great central gate Concobar Mac Nessa himself lays waste our host. I see there the high Queen retreat in a panic. Here only is there a stand made, but at all points else they are driven back, or isolated in the midst of our host which pours around them. Like a sinking ship, when the waters roll over her bulwarks, and she, trembling, prepares to go down into the abyss, so now is the host of the descendants of Rury.

"Fergus Mac Roy hath himself advanced against the great son of Nessa. Before him he routs the battalions of Emain Macha. Here, indeed, there is a dire contest, for the Arch-Kings of Ulla have met, and the son of Nessa is driven back."[1]

[1] Fergus Mac Roy was once King of Ulster.

It was then that the guards of the king ran forward, owing to their anxiety, and in order that they might the better see, and they intercepted the vision of Fer-lōga. But he shouted, and they fell back to the right hand and the left.

But Aileel said:—

"How looks the battle now, O Fer-lōga?"

And Fer-lōga answered:—

"Like islands in the sea, which swiftly lessen in the rush of a mighty spring-tide, so are the battalions of the Ultonians, and like the foaming edge of the sea where land and water meet, bright with foam, convulsed, loud with the reveberations of the waves, are the borders of their intercepted and surrounded cohorts, litten with the flash and glitter of weapons, and with the lightning of blade meeting blade, and spear-point upon brazen armour. Like a wedge the army of Conaill Carna stand out into the multitude of the Tân, and Lægairé Buada fights upon the edge of the foss. Elsewhere the Ultonians contend around the gates, but far the greater part are islanded in the overflowing numbers of the Tân."

"What distant moaning is this I hear, O Fer-lōga, like the noise of the tumult of waters, when in the still night they roar upon some vast unbroken stand? From the south comes a roaring as of troubled seas, and from the north a blended moan makes answer."

"Strike again, son of the Red Rossa. Reel and stand not, proud tyrant of Emain. Concobar[1] reels before the stroke of Fergus. Loud roars his stricken shield, echoing to the Three Waters. The wave of Tu

[1] T. B. C., p. 356.

Inver is troubled for its king. The mighty Lir laments in vain for the King of Ulla. In vain Tonn Rury mourns, and Tonn Cleena sends forth a cry."[1]

"How now looks the battle, O Fer-Lōga, in the open plain, and along the foss and rampart?"

"Not conquered, but wiped out is the great Red Branch of the Ultonians. Like stars in the dawning day, one by one go out their battle-standards over the plain."

"I hear strange cries, O Fer-Lōga, and a shrieking of banves and battle-furies, not as of them that dance amid the slain, exulting in slaughter, and over plains steeped in the blood of heroes, but as of those who go forth[2] to battle with some great unconquered champion, and who cry around him in the air. Before my eyes shadows pass, intermingled with pale glares, running swiftly. As in a vision, I see the children of Māga, and my own sons, and the champions of the Clan Dēga. Horribly their eyes look forth from white hollow faces, and their jaws are like those that look for the tressel."

"Surely, O king, these are wild omens to assail thee in thy day of triumph, while amid shouts of victory, the Four Provinces trample into earth the remnant of the Clanna Rury."

"Yet, surely I err not, O Fer-lōga. Past me, running westward, I hear a trampling of unseen[3] people fleeing as from the onset of a god. Seest thou aught new in the camp of the Ultonians?"

"I see, indeed, that great champion whom I noted

[1] See p. 198. [2] M. & C., Vol. III., p. 425.

[3] For the flight of the spirits, who supported Queen Meave, before Cuculain, see T. B. C., p. 362.

erewhile. Now is he infuriated, and he runs raging around his steeds. Gigantic are they in stature, and for beauty, like those weird horses, which they say in the sacred mountains are seen at night grazing beside some fairy lough.[1] Loudly they neigh and shake their tossing manes. Scarcely can he who yokes them buckle the yoke-strap around their brawny necks. One of them is grey, almost to whiteness, and his huge main tosses loose; but the mane of the other is plaited and ribanded."[2]

"Describe the charioteer, O Fer-lōga. A chill fear grows upon me."

"He is red-haired,[3] I think, and a gibné of gold confines his temples. A short inar of deer-skin[4] he wears above the lēna, and the sleeve thereof is wide and cut open to the elbow. He is wrathful and impetuous,[5] and like his steeds, fierce and infuriated. One would say that he was impotent from exceeding wrath. He shouts as he plies his work; and looks towards the chief tent of the quarter of the Clans of Murthemney. Surely I have seen that champion. He resembles the sons of the King of Gowra. For of them there are two who fight among the Ultonians, Id,[6] the charioteer of Conaill,

[1] It was beside Lough Liath, in Slieve Fuad (the Fews mountain), that Cuculain surprised and captured the Liath Macha. See Feast of Bricrind, Crowe MSS.

[2] M. and C., Vol. III., p. 429.

[3] See a passage from preface to the published fac-similé of Leabar-na-Huidhré.

[4] For Læg's Dress, see T. B. C., pp. 178, 179.

[5] For the impetuosity of Lœg, see M. and C., Vol. III., p. 449.

[6] For his brothers, see Feast of Bricrind, Crowe MSS. Sheeling, Gælicé, Sedlaing.

and Sheeling, the charioteer of Lægairé. Now, from its house he draws the chariot with an angry rush. I have not seen such a chariot[1] before on the plains of Eiré. Well matches it those giant steeds. The wheels are of burnished brass, and the revolving spokes send forth fiery flashes. The body is green, and the pole ornamented with bands of silver, and where it is made fast to the yoke there is a shining of gold."

"O Fer-loga, there is evil forward. What is that which thou didst prophesy, O fairy prophetess? 'How look my hosts upon Magh Ai? Bloodied all, and crimson.'"

So murmured the king, and he prayed unto his gods. Fer-lōga, on the other side, uttered a sudden cry, and, starting backwards, said:—

"But who is this other mighty warrior running forward past the chariots and the horses, swift as a deer, impetuous as a war-horse, breathing valour? Truly the warriors are not born who could resist his onset. Of the race of those who, in the ancient days, fought at Moy Tura for the sovereignty of Erin, is he. So terrible is he, and so beautiful."

"Describe him to me, O Fer-lōga. Tell me his tokens that I may know."

"He is fair and ruddy, and his neck and arms bared to the shoulder and his limbs below the lena are white like snow. His hair shakes forth a light as he runs. Like a star the burnished cath-barr glitters above his brows. He wears the bratta[2] of a king, and a round golden brooch upon his breast. In his left hand he

[1] Pub. Oss. So., Vol. II., p. 73 et seq. [2] *i.e.*, crimson silk.

carries a spear,[1] nor do I think that the son of Mōr-Febis,[2] in the prime of his youth, could have raised it from the ground. Yet this youth, be he god or hero, runs through the camp swifter than Ossorian steeds around the Raths of Cahirmān; lighter is it in his hand than a goad in the hand of a charioteer. This in one hand he carries, and in the other what I deem to be a sling. Beneath the flying crimson bratta his lëna is filled with coloured devices."[3]

"Small is the hope thou hast left me, O Fer-lōga. Tell me, yet again, his tokens. What is the likeness of his shield?"

"As yet I see but the edge. Now, like burning fire, he springs to the summit of the rampart. Pale azure, bordered with ruddy gold;[4] there is a terrible portent in the centre—a boar's head, black as night, and fiery flashes seem to dart from its eyes."

"Have done, O Fer-lōga; it is enough. Now, let the thunder-cloud burst with flame and ruin over the Olnemacta, for your strength is at an end, and upon the day of your triumph night comes. Let the Fir-bolgs of Iorrus flee to the Shannon, and the sons of Maga be brave only to escape. Fly now beyond Slieve Blahma[5]

[1] This was the "Gœ-bolg," *i.e.*, "the gigantic spear" of Cuculain, corresponding to the great Pelian ash of Achilles, *cf.*, Fir-bolg = gigantic men.

[2] This is Lōk whose death, at the hands of Cuculain, is described in Vol. I.

[3] The descriptions of Cuculain are too numerous to be specified.

[4] See "Great Breach of Murthemney;" also M. and C., Vol. II., p. 329.

[5] The Slieve Bloom mountains. One of them, Ard-Erin, *i.e.*, the heights of Eiré, was sacred to Eiré the goddess, from whom Ireland has taken the name of Erin.

with the Ernai, O Cairbré the Fair and Great, and to your own territories, ye nobles of Meath and Bregia, ye chivalry of Cahirmān and Dinn[1] Rie. Not Fergus, nor the seven Maineys, nor Cet will save you now from the might of that warrior, whose shout, like the shout of Lu contending against the Fomoroh,[2] resounds against the canopy of the sky. O Cailitin, thou mighty wizard, prophetic of evil things to thee all was revealed. The earth will not breed one like to him, or second. It is the Hound of Murthemney, O Fer-lōga, returning again to battle unsubdued. It is Cuculain, the invincible, son of Sualtam."

So cried the aged king, and wrung his unavailing hands; but he, Cuculain, son of Sualtam, stood afar upon the black rampart of the Clanna Rury, terrible in his beauty, a portent of war clear-seen like flame against the western clouds, returning again to battle unsubdued, and he shouted the war-cry of the Clanna Rury, like the shout of a battalion, and terribly his voice rang across the plain, and like the sound of some mighty trumpet,[3] blown through by the lips of a giant.

[1] On the Barrow, near Leighlin Bridge. It was an ancient capital of Leinster.

[2] The slaughter of the men of Meave by Cuculain is compared with that of Lu upon the Fomorians, T. B. C., p. 43. The sky is represented as solid in the battle of Moy Leana.

[3] See T. B. C., p. 184. It is remarkable that, in a situation somewhat similar, Homer also compares the voice of Achilles to the sound of a trumpet.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A LISS BY THE WAY-SIDE.

"Only maidenhood and youth,
Only eyes that are most fair,
And the pureness of a mouth,
And the grace of golden hair,
But beside her we grow wise,
And we breathe a finer air."

E. DOWDEN.

Now, although in the deep forest between Fochainé and the sea, Læg tenderly nursing and ministering to him, had restored the troubled mind of the hero, distraught by loneliness and war and much suffering, nevertheless, Cuculain was still weak for many days, and this was a wonder unto both, for even Cethern, whom Læg had met flying from that disastrous battle in Murthemney, and led to this glade, was the first to recover from his wounds, who, restored by the wise physician, Fingin Faith-laih,[1] soon after departed to join the monarch at Emain Macha. But as for Cuculain, the prophet-leech declared that his art was powerless to restore him, and that some unseen evil power weighed down and debilitated the hero. All day, from morn to eve, he used to lie quiet and listless like one in a decline.

Nevertheless, after the host of Meave had evacuated Ulster, and gone away into the midland counties, Cuculain said to Læg:—

"Methinks, O dear Læg, that this depression and weakness relax day by day, and my strength returns.

[1] M. and C., Vol. II., p. 318.

Let us proceed now to Emain Macha, and may be when I arrive there I shall be able to go out again with the Red Branch."

Then was Læg glad, and that day he prepared a passage through the forest northwards, and the next morning, at break of day, they passed forth out of the brown silent alleys of the forest, and emerged upon the plain; but Cuculain was grieved, seeing the desolateness of the land, and hearing the lamentations of the people around their blackened homes and herdless fields. By these they were made aware how that the Red Branch, having shaken off the deadly stupor, had passed southwards, intending to intercept the host of the plunderers ere they might cross the Shannon, moving westwards; and they said that Concobar Mac Nessa and the whole rising-out of the province had gone on to Tailtèen that day. There Læg, selecting from amongst them a fit person, sent away the yellow steeds to Emain Macha, whither Emer and the household of Cuculain had fled before the host of Meave.

All that day they twain travelled westward, and the night fell as they travelled. But after night-fall, when they thought to have passed the night in the open, they beheld a light and went on thither, going, as they went, through an unplundered territory, for in the still night they heard the cattle peacefully grazing in the fields, if at times they paused, fearful to have missed the track. Then was Læg glad, recognising the palace of a noble, and they passed from the chariot track, going through a spacious lawn, upon which grew great trees,[1] and

[1] That, even in the heroic times, ornamental timber was cultivated, see M. and C., Vol. II., p. 298.

approached the liss. Without foss or rampart was that liss,[1] and at the front entrance Cuculain alighted; but Læg drave on the steeds to the great court-yard which was to the east of the house, that he might wash and feed his horses, and put up the chariot for the night.

Then around Læg, hearing the grinding wheels of the great war-car, there came forth the people of the liss with torches of splintered bog-wood, and they assisted him. But when Læg had attended carefully to the wants of his steeds, and had poured barley[2] into their mangers, and had washed and dried the chariot, around which the people of the Dûn thronged wonderingly, he removed therefrom the armour and weapons of Cuculain, and entered the liss by the door that opened into the court-yard. That chamber which first received him was the kitchen of the liss, spacious, bright with many vessels of burnished brass, on which glowed the light of a large and well-fed fire, and there the slaves and base tenants[3] of the chief were accustomed to assemble in the evenings, and to converse after their wise. As Læg entered, he desired the house-steward[4] to conduct him to the chamber where he and his master should lie that night, and to prepare a second bed in that chamber, for in all their forays and expeditions they were accustomed not to lie separate. Him, the steward, subdued by the greatness and lofty bearing of the warrior, conducted

[1] The liss, was a noble's residence; the dûn, a king's. The law enforced that the latter should be ramparted and fossed.

[2] Three years' old. See "Feast of Bricrind," Crowe MSS.

[3] *i.e.*, Tenants at will. They were not numerous under the Brehon law. See M. and C., Vol. III., p. 449 *et passim*.

[4] For the importance of this officer, see M. and C., Vol. III., p. 139.

meekly, first, into the great central chamber of the liss, where sat Cuculain and a young child alone, for it was into it that the sleeping apartments[1] opened. But when Cuculain saw the house-steward walk meekly and crest-fallen in front, and the charioteer striding behind, laden with the weapons and armour, he laughed till the bright tears glistened in his eyes, but the charioteer marked it not, for Cuculain laughed not aloud, but Læg entered the chamber and ordered the other to bring him such things as he required.

As for Cuculain, after he had stricken the great oaken door with the door-staff, there appeared that same household officer, and he stood straddling in the entrance with an uncouth dignity of demeanour, and, with much authority, demanded his name and purpose. But Cuculain answered quietly, saying that he was of the Knights of the Red Branch, and that he hastened to join the rising-out of the Province under the king, and desired rest and shelter that night, for he looked not to receive knightly courtesy from that base wight. But when he would question further, there came out from within a very fair child, who reproved the servitor, and gave a sweet welcome to the warrior. Nevertheless she started, and her colour changed when the light from within fell upon his face, for his countenance was hollow and wan, though, for the moment, he smiled. Around his temples there was a linen band, and his left arm was in a sling.

Then Cuculain entered the liss, but within there was a chamber, warm and bright, for it was hung around

[1] The sitting-chamber in centre of house, the bed-chambers opening into it all round. M. and C., Vol. I., p. 345, *et seq.*

with dyed tapestry, and ornamented with deers' antlers and instruments of the chase, and the floor was strewn with fresh rushes.[1] Round the walls candles burned in sconces of polished brass, and a great fire of ashen logs and peat burned in the wide hearth-place. As he entered, there arose from her seat the lady of the liss, and to her the child repeated the words of Cuculain, and she bade him welcome to the liss in words few and kind, for very knightly was the aspect of Cuculain, and she knew that no baseness or treachery entered under her roof with that youth. Moreover, a pang of sacred pity touched her heart when she looked on the war-worn knight, seeing upon him the marks of battle and of suffering, and she bade the steward to conduct him to the best chamber, and to provide him with such things as he might require;[2] also, she said that her husband and her sons were with the king, and that she was alone in the liss.

Then, after a space, and when Læg had returned into the chamber, the lady of the liss prepared for them supper, and the warriors sat down to eat, though Cuculain ate and drank but slightly, and with her Læg conversed courteously, for amongst women he was by no means impetuous or domineering, but Cuculain spake little.

Apart by herself sat that fair child, embroidering a lēna for one of her brothers, if haply he might return home unhurt from the wars; but while she wrought, she glanced often towards the son of Sualtam, wonder-

[1] See Keatinge's history, p. 332.

[2] See "Feast of Bricrind," where Queen Meave orders a bath to be prepared for Cuculain after travel.

ing, for never before had she seen such an one within her father's liss; for when the great knights of the realm passed through that tuath,[1] they were entertained by the brufir,[2] or by the king, nor did she at all err deeming that Læg was the greater; but her mother said in her own mind that this great warrior led somewhither that war-worn wounded knight. Nevertheless, most tenderly and compassionately she entreated Cuculain, for weak and weary that night was the hero, and heavily over his languid eyes the white eye-lids drooped, yet ever in her words and actions she gave the great son of Riangowra the first place, and her woman's heart was glad, seeing beneath her roof that warlike knightly twain.

Now when supper was ended, Læg went forth into the kitchen of the liss, bearing Cuculain's armour and weapons, that he might see if they had taken rust, or their brightness been at all dimmed; but the lady set a stool beside the fire for Cuculain, on the right side of the deep-embayéd hearth, for she saw him when he shivered, being feverish, and she laid thereon a thick embroidered coverlet, and bade him rest, departing herself to attend to household cares. But Cuculain thanked her, smiling faintly, and sat down close by the great fire, supporting his head with his hand upon the left knee. Then the child brought her stool thither, too, with her embroidering instruments, moving noiselessly over the floor, and sat down on the other side, and looked

[1] The tuath corresponed to our barony. In those days it constituted a small realm, and had its king. The Mŏr-tuath corresponded to our county, and had its Ard-rie, who controlled the kings of the tuaths.

[2] See Vol. I., p. 78; also M. and C., Vol. I., p. 160. Cuculain's foster-father was a brufir.

wonderingly upon his mighty limbs, his head, so nobly and lightly shaped, and the exceeding brightness of his hair, through which the fire-light glittered; but the warrior, unconscious, nodded perpetually, and re-covered himself, overcome with weariness and slumber.

After a space, from without there arose an outcry and clamour, and Cuculain raised his head suddenly, and he met the eyes of the child. Then Cuculain smiled and said:—

"I think that I have slept, and, pretty maid, thou hast not awaked me, but hast suffered me display before thee my sloth and drowsihood."

And the child answered:—

"Then would I transgress the laws of Ulla. For it is not permitted that any should awake thee as thou sleepest, and this is one of thy geisé."[1]

And Cuculain answered:—

"Thou has not seen me before this night, my child, nor have I told any my name in this palace, and yet thou dost describe my geisé."

But she replied straightway:—

"I know well who thou art, for thou art that great Cuculain of whom the warriors endlessly converse; and they said that thou wert slain on the banks of the Avon Dia, after warring many days against the whole host of

[1] Certain superstitions regarding what for each hero would produce good fortune or ill. To Fergus Mac Roy it was a geis that he should refuse a banquet. To Conairy Mōr, that three knights with red arms should go before him. The origin of Cuculain's geis is described in the Leabar na Huidhre, and arose from an accident in his boyhood. The idea plays a striking part in the heroic literature. Certain geisé were attached to particular royalties. They are enumerated in "The Book of Rights."

Meave, guarding with thy life the borders of our nation, and they said that thou wert seen each night looking northward from the hill-top to see if even one would come to thine aid. Truly I wept much, hearing that thou wert slain."

Said the knight :—

"I am, indeed, Cuculain, the son of Sualtam, but deemed that I was here unknown."

And the child answered :—

"Many a wandering bard from Emain Macha and Dún-dalgan has come hither chanting tales concerning thee, and they have answered my questions; and I believe that saying, too, that not Sualtam was thy father, but Lu Lamfáda, the immortal god who, at Moy Tura, brake down the kingdom of the Fómoroh.

Then Cuculain trembled when he heard this saying, and the child checked her running speech, and was silent, for she saw that she had erred, and Cuculain was silent, too. But soon he spake again, and she, in childish wise, conversed incessantly, and she said that she was to go to the Court of Mugain,[1] the High Queen of the Province, along with the daughters of her own king, and that the Queen of all Ulla would be her foster-mother. Moreover, she brought to Cuculain a little tympan of polished box-wood, with a silver comb upon it, saying that it had been given to her as a gift by her father after he had returned from the great fair of Tailteen,[2] and that she could sing four songs to its

[1] Feast of Bricrind.

[2] This great triennial fair, which was also a place of parliaments and games, was founded by the god Lu Lamfáda in honour of his foster-mother, Tailta, wife of Yeoha Mac Erc, the last king of Fir-bolgs.

accompaniment; and she asked Cuculain whether he had heard the song concerning the children of Lir, and when he said that there were many, but that he had heard only some, she tuned the little tympan, and sang this lay with small but very sweet voice.

The Lament of Finoola.[1]

"I am alone in the cold waters of the Moyle,[2]
My feet are frozen to the cruel rock;
Through my feathers ruffled with the blast,
The cold pierces into my bones.

"I sit solitary upon Carrig-na-rōn,
With the cold grey sky above my head;
And afar over the melancholy ocean
The white-topp'd waves keep breaking, breaking ceaselessly.

"Whither have you wandered from me, my brothers,
Æd, and Fiechra, and Conn?
In every wave that breaks in foam over the sea,
I think I see the fair head of one of my brothers.

"Oh! we were happy together on the Moyle,
We were happy together once on this wild rock;
Though in the form of birds, and forgotten by our kindred,
Though solitary and deserted, we were happy together here.

[1] Gælicé Fionuala.

[2] The sea between Ireland and Scotland. Moore's poem, "Silent, O Moyle," is founded on this legend. The whole story is translated in the New Atlantis.

"O Æd, my noble brother!
O Fiechra, the pleasant and comely tender Conn!
Oh, that you were with me once more on Carrig-na-rōn,
Widely over you would I expand my happy wings.

"Once in our own form we were happy on Slieve Few,[1]
Sleeping with our father in his own bed;
And once again, we were happy together here,
Sleeping out of the wind in the shelter'd clefts of the rock."

But after that the child, not waiting to be praised, asked many questions of Cuculain concerning Lir and his unhappy children, and Cuculain told her the whole story as related by the singers of Eiré.

This was that child afterwards celebrated as Einey In-ūva, and who, with Lewy Rievenerg, kept watch by his bed-side, when he lay at Emain Macha stricken of the Shee.[2]

In the meantime Læg had borne the weapons and armour of his master into the kitchen of the liss, where were many fūdirs and base tenants of the chief, and amongst them, that house-steward played the lord, and discoursed concerning the affairs of the realm. Pale-faced was he and fat, and great in his own eyes nevertheless; was not that servile people deceived though they assented to all that he said. But when the great charioteer entered, his glory was eclipsed, and no one responded

[1] Gælicé, Fuad, now the Fews. Here Lir had his unseen dwelling-place.

[2] This very strange story is translated in the New Atlantis. See "Sick-bed of Cuculain."

when he spake. For Læg had ordered the slaves to set before him a table, and he laid thereon the martial eqiupment of Cuculain, and the yoke of the horses and their bits, and the gold and silver ornaments of the harness, and these all he purified from rust and dust until they shone and sparkled. Round him thronged that unwarlike people, wondering at the mighty weapons of Cuculain, and with them Læg conversed concerning the forays and raids of the plunderers of the host of Meave, and they answered, as is the custom of their race, with many voices, and contradiction, and mutual recrimination.

But when Læg withdrew from its sheath that great shield which men called Fabâne, and also Duvâne, that he might see if it had contracted any stain; and when that unmartial crew started back, terror-stricken, at the warlike portent, and its fiery eyes and gleaming teeth, then said the steward, prompted by his ungenerous mind:—

"The knights of the Crave Rue have each their own warlike symbol, and the wild boar's head is the symbol of Cuculain, therefore it is unlawful for any lesser knight to wear that symbol in his shield."

Then said Læg:—

"This shield[1] is the shield of Cuculain, and he himself is now beneath this roof."

To whom, answered the steward, laughing scornfully:—

"If thou wilt obtain belief thou shalt publish else-

[1] The names and descriptions of all the shields of the chief Ultonian champions will be found in various parts of the literature of this cycle.

where this tale. Enjoy now the hospitality of the liss, nor take upon thyself a glory which belongs to another. Well I know the haviour and visage of great warriors, and I desire not to say aught in detraction of the wounded knight, but seek not to persuade me that this stripling is that mighty champion of the Red Branch who, they say, is, alone, a match for armies."

Then arose Læg in great wrath, and he seized the house-steward by the throat with his left hand, and forced him down upon his knees easily, for he was of a soft and fat habit, and he cried:—

"Thou fat churl, I swear by the sword of Cuculain, the Cruaideen,[1] and by his spear, the Gæ Bolg, which no man in Erin can wield but himself, that I shall stab thee if thou wilt not withdraw this lie which thou hast uttered."

But while Læg vociferated, there appeared above, in a gallery which overlooked the kitchen, the lady of the liss, attracted thither by the clamour and outcry, and Læg, seeing her, said:—

"Pardon me this, my violence, O noble lady, but this fellow said I lied, saying that my master was Cuculain, son of Sualtam, and that he himself was now beneath thy roof."

But she, stricken with wonder and amazement, answered:—

"Pardon us in thy turn, O noble warrior. For when he who is the head of a household is departed, a woman cannot restrain the insolence of intemperate minds;" and so saying, she reproved the house-steward before the slaves.

[1] Cuculain's sword was preserved as a relic for at least two centuries.

Now Cuculain and Læg slept together that night, and at break of day they arose. Nevertheless, Einey In-ūva[1] had arisen before them, and prepared for them breakfast ere they departed. After that the heroes took a friendly farewell of the beautiful child, and departed, travelling westward, but she stood long in the doorway of the liss until they disappeared from her sight.

About mid-day they met the track of the Red Branch, and glad were these two warriors therefore. All day long resounded the clash and clang of arms around them twain as they travelled; and Cuculain lamented continually the slowness with which they went; but ever the face of the hero grew paler, and with difficulty could he sit upright in the chariot, and the affectionate heart of Læg was distressed, as he looked sidelong at Cuculain, and saw the growing pallor, and felt that he became weaker as the day went on. Yet ever he called upon Læg to urge on the steeds, saying that he heard the strife of warriors, and that the Red Branch was routed before the men of Meave. Then Læg passed his left arm around the hero, that he might support him, and Cuculain said:—

"There is a magic oppression upon me, O Læg, and it increases as we draw nigh unto the Red Branch. Even before thy coming it was heavy upon me while I fought at the Avon Dia, and now it hath altogether overpowered me, and relaxed wholly my courage and my strength."

Then was Læg terrified, for the night fell while Cuculain thus spake, and they drew near the great

[1] This is an anachronism. It was in the time of Cuculain's sickness at Emain Macha that she received this surname of "the sorrowful."

forest, which bordered the plain of Clārha upon the north. After this they entered the forest; and as they passed, there were echoes in the hollow forest, and remote reveberations and voices as they went. Joyfully then at length they emerged upon the plain southwards, and lo! all the southern horizon glowed with many fires, and before the fires passed great forms of warriors; and further westward, on the edge of the forest, there burned, at long intervals, fires few and dim, and from the one encampment arose a glad uproar, but in the other there was silence.

"Guide westwards now the steeds, O Læg," said Cuculain; and Læg obeyed him. But when they had gone westward about two miles, they entered the camp of the Red Branch, coming first upon the quarter of Lægairé, son of Cónud, and it was there that the shouting first commenced, for they immediately recognised the horses of Cuculain, and beginning there, the shouting and acclamation went westwards like a rapid flame, until it embraced the whole camp, when the Ultonians raised that mighty shout, heard by the men of Meave, on account of the recovery of their champion; and now to them it seemed a small thing to conquer the four provinces of Erin, seeing that they had again in their midst the invincible son of Sualtam.

Then arose from the grass, where he had lain outstretched, Fergus, the great son of Lēda, some time King of Ulla. Stained with dark blood was the champion, his bratta torn and tattered, and his voice a hoarse whisper, for it was broken shouting all day in the din of battle, contending against Cormac Conlingas and the exiles, and he, approaching the chariot, said:—

"Were there no graves in Ulla, O son of Riangowra, that thou hast brought down the hope of the Ultonians to perish upon this plain. For he is dead, and not alive, who sits by thy side. To-day the Red Branch have been conquered by the men of Meave, and there is not strength to restore the battle. Verily, of yore, to do folly was thy custom, for prudence the gods have denied thee."

So spake the great King of Rathlin, hoarsely, with fierce words, and Læg more fiercely replied, with insult and vociferation; but now, through the surging crowd that surrounded the chariot of Cuculain, there ran forward Lewy Rievenerg, son of the three Finns of Emain, and Erc, son of Cairbry Nia-far, King of Tara, and Lewy kissed the right hand of Cuculain and the hem of his bratta, weeping, and the men of Murthemney surrounded the chariot, keeping back the crowd, and forcing the steeds onward to the quarter of the nations of Coo-alney and Murthemney; and here they were met by Concobar Mac Nessa, Conaill Carna, and Lægairé Buada; nor did the son of Sualtam leave the chariot that night without assistance, but leaning upon Conaill and Lægairé.

Forthwith the host of the Ultonians shook off all despair and gloom, and throughout the whole camp fires were kindled and flesh cooked, and there arose a noise of festivity and great joy. In the pavilion of the High King, too, a banquet was prepared, and Cuculain was brought to that banquet in a chariot of the High King, and Lewy Rievenerg guided the steeds, sitting by Cuculain, and Conaill stalked on one side, and Lægairé on the other. But as they went, Cuculain said:—

"Whose quarter is this, O Conaill, and who are these immense warriors, I have not seen them before among the Red Branch?"

And Conaill Carna answered:—

"This, O dear Setanta, is the quarter of the Clan Humōr. Out of the northern isles have they come down to aid the Red Branch, and they boast themselves to be of the race of giants who, at Moy Tura, contended with the gods. To them Cairbré Nia-far hath promised territories in mid-Erin, if they will give securities out of the Red Branch for the fulfilment of covenants, and the preservation of their loyalty and allegiance."

And Cuculain said:—

"I will be a security, for many times have I desired to behold that great race restored again in Eiré."

And after that they passed through a quarter where the tents were great, and the warriors who lined the way on the right hand and the left, and shouted as Cuculain passed by, were most noble and warlike to look upon; but the king's tent, conspicuous with the banner of the tribe and the guard of immense spearmen around it, was very mean and paltry, and resembling the sheeling of some wretched man who, on an unclaimed plot beside a public way, erects his miserable hut, and whose poverty and wretchedness are his protection. In the door-way, conversing with his guards as though he noted not the hero, stood the king of that nation, clad meanly, and of a most unroyal haviour. Bricrind[1] was his name, sur-

[1] In the feast of Bricrind the character of this strange Ultonian is developed. He seems to have been the Thersites of the Red Branch. In one place he is represented as being conducted out of a banquet hall by warriors with drawn swords, lest he should stir mutual slaughter amongst the Ultonians. Unlike Thersites, he was rich and powerful.

named Nimthenga. More than all the rest had he lamented for Cuculain, for his patrimony bordered on the kingdom of Cuculain, and no word of the mild hero rankled in his mind. Moreover, he was the first to hasten eastward when the cry was raised concerning Cuculain; and when he beheld him hollow-faced and wan, and bound with bandages, he wept unnoticed, and hastened back to his tent without greeting.

Him Conaill Carna addressing, said:—

"O Bricrind, hast thou no word of welcome for him whose fame is over all Eiré, and who alone contended many days against the host of Meave, guarding with his life the frontiers of Ulla."

And Bricrind answered:—

"Not for nothing is the son of Sualtam surnamed the generous, and of lavish gifts. To Dûn Rury, too, have come his well-paid flatterers, who say that in battle there are the faces of gods seen around him, and that thunder and lightnings precede him. Truly, O Cu, I would desire to have seen thee on that day, when going southward against Curoi Mac Dary, thou didst leap the estuary of the broad Shannon."[1]

Then Cuculain blushed all over his pallid face, but again he smiled and said:—

"Now, O Lewy, guide on the steeds, for if we give him an answer and parley, soon wilt thou and Conaill and Lægairé be prepared to sheathe your swords in each other's sides."

[1] From this legend, Loop, or Leap Head, Co. Clare, takes its name. They said that Cuculain sprang thence to the Kerry coast, when he went against Curoi Mac Dary. It was probably from this neighbourhood that he crossed over into Kerry in that war.

So they went on to the High King's pavilion; and Cuculain sat that night in the Champion's Throne of the Ultonians, wan and speechless, but happy, sitting once more in the midst of his comrades.

But, in the meantime, the men of Murthemney were making a house for their king, and some from the forest were bringing in barths of pliant osiers and saplings of the willow, and others were planting in the ground the trunks of tall fir-trees. Deftly, then, the weavers wove the walls of the tent, and it was roofed with branches and rushes, secured by ropes of twisted grass, and they daubed the sides with clay, and curtained it within with woollen hangings—a rude tapestry. Moreover, they made therein a bed for the hero, first heather, and then fine rushes, and over them deer-skins; also beautiful rugs having a short nap, and fine linen, that the war-worn warrior might enjoy perfect rest, and that sleep might visit him the more readily. Moreover, from many fires they brought the glowing embers, and made a clear red fire in his tent, in order that there might not be a smoke, and after that they awaited his return anxiously, and it was past midnight when they beheld the torches and the retinue of the chiefs of the Red Branch who returned with Cuculain. All these departed when they reached the tent-door, and Lewy Rievenerg went in and attended to Cuculain, and he watched by his bed that night; nor was it long after Cuculain lay down when he fell into a deep sleep, and he lay without motion,[1] and without dream, so profound was his slumber that night. By his side sat Lewy Rievenerg, or moved noiselessly around the tent, and outside a hundred warriors guarded all the approaches.

[1] See T. B. C., p. 174.

It was long after midnight when Læg and his companion returned from the banquet of the High King, and the guards suffered them not to approach the tent of Cuculain. Therefore, in another place they gathered round a fire and caroused, and much Læg boasted that night concerning himself and concerning Cuculain; and his brothers, Id and Sheeling, meekly accepted his greatness. A charioteering clan was this, and they were wont to furnish charioteers to the prime champions of Eiré.

That night, too, it was determined by the High King and his sāba to draw a rampart and a foss around the camp, and this task was referred to the Clan Humōr, for they were mighty builders. Under them there wrought twelve thousand men, and ere it was dawn a great earthwork and a trench defended the host of the Clanna Rury, pierced with many gates, and they devised a cunning arrangement by which these might be opened and quickly closed.

These were the chiefs of the great Clan Humōr, the descendants of the people of Mac Erc, to whom exile was better than slavery, and the barren isles, swept by cold northern seas, than the fertile plains of Eiré, and the yoke of the divine conquerors—Angus, Cimi and Cutrû, Mil, Dæla and Beara, Mod and Irgas and Cing, Bairnech, Barambel and Concra, Lara, Adair and Tamain, Asal and Conaill.[1]

[1] These heroes subsequently acquired possessions in the west of Erin, and built great raths and stone fortresses. Angus built Dûn Angus in the Isle of Arran. There is a photograph of this great stone-work in Miss Stokes' work on Irish architecture. Cimi settled at Lough Cimi, now Lough Hackett. From Cutrû, Lough Cooter took its name. Mil's fortress was also in Arran. I think it is now called the Black Fort.

CHAPTER XIX.

CUCULAIN GOES OUT TO BATTLE.

"But a blast met them, or, it was Cuculain."

ANCIENT BARD.[1]

Not half the disc of the red sun was seen next morning above the horizon when the Red Branch began to descend into the plain; for the place wherein they were encamped was a rising ground, and therein were two hills, of which the name of one was Gaura, and the name of the other Ilgaura,[2] names attached on account of the shouting and loud shouting of the previous night, when the Ultonians gave a welcome to their recovered champion, and those hills, as it were, responded to one another with far-heard cries.

Bear settled at Kin Beara, now Kinvarra, near Galway. Mod, at Moidlinn, now Moy-Linn, Barony of Kiltartan, Co. Galway. Irgas, Black Head, Co. Clare. Cing, near Croagh Patrick. Tamain, at Rinn Tamain, now Tawan Point, near Clarin's Bridge, neighbourhood of Galway. Asal, at Droum Asal, Barony of Coshma, Co. Limerick. See Pub. Oss. So., Vol. V., p. 287.

This great Clan revolted from Cairbry Nia-far, and went westward into military service with Queen Meave, but were defeated in a great battle at Rath Cruhane by Cuculain. In this battle Cuculain was assisted by Cet, Ross, a great champion of the Ernai, and Conaill Carna, the Ultonian.

"From thence they marched to Rath Cruhane,
The four dread and stern champions."

MAC LIAG.

[1] T. B. C., p. 355.

[2] See O'Curry's notes to "Children of Turann," New Atlantis.

Through all the gateways then there poured perpetually the chivalry of the Ultonians, both chariots and horsemen, and dense resolute masses of heavy-armed spear-men, and also those who were lightly equipped,[1] superior to the others in agility, and in movements swiftly executed, but far inferior in strength and force of impact and resistance, for those others seemed as if naught created could disorder their dense, dark, silent-advancing masses, and for about the space of an hour, all these were pouring forth perpetually into the plain, with a sound like the roaring of the sea. But from the other camp, also, came forth the mighty host of the great Queen of the west of Eiré, flooding all the plain from the north-east to the south-west, glittering in their martial equipment and bravery, and the battle was joined.

But, meantime, Læg lay slumbering in one of the tents of the men of Murthemney, where, having rolled around him a rug, he lay down to sleep. Then one touched him, and awaking he saw Lewy Rievenerg, son of the Three Finns, and he, addressing him, said :—

"Awake now, O son of Riangowra, and watch over thy master, for the host goeth forth to the battle."

Then started forth Læg, and he hastened to the tent of the son of Sualtam, but Cuculain still slept, for a deep tide of dreamless slumber was poured over his mind, and he lay without motion or sound, breathing quiet breath like a child.[2] But as Læg scanned narrowly the countenance of his lord, and marked with

[1] In mediæval times these would be, respectively, gallowglass and kerne.

[2] T. B. C., p. 174.

joy how his colour was returning to the pallid cheek, he heard the first crash of arms, and returning to the door beheld where Cethern[1] and the battalion of Dun-da-Bann, advancing before the rest, charged the army of the Tân at that point where Endee commanded a battalion of the clans of Moyrisk, and Læg shouted, forgetful of the sacred prohibition,[2] when he saw the Olnemacta routed before the son of Fintann, and himself raging amid their disordered ranks.[3]

Nevertheless Læg was vexed and indignant when he saw the battle joined, and beheld his master, after whom the Red Branch were wont to charge, lying motionless in his tent; and he ran to the house in which were his war-steeds, and removed from them the horse-cloths, and put on them their head-stalls, that they might be in readiness, hoping against hope that his lord, awaking, might have returned to his strength and his ancient prowess. After that he took food, and he laid a white cloth upon the ground in the tent of Cuculain, and set food and ale thereon; also he brought into the tent all Cuculain's armour and battle-dress, and again standing, looked out upon the battle. Like a convulsed and tempest-ridden sea was the great plain of Gaura, and filled with a deafening din of clashing arms, and shouts of victory or of rage, and the earth trembled. With the rising sun rose, too, the star of Emain Macha, for there was a dissension in the host of Meave, and the southern nations fought but with half a heart. Moreover, the warriors of Meath and Bregia, and those who dwelt by the great lakes,

[1] T. B. C., p. 275; note.
[2] I. E., the geis.
[3] Cethern slew Endee, T. B. C., p. 275.

and along the banks of the Liffey, and wheresoever the power of the king of Tara was felt, drew back when they saw amid the ranks of the Ultonians, Erc,[1] the Fair-haired, son of Cairbry Nia-far, and all this time, now at one point, and now at another, the battalions of the Clanna Rury routed the men of Meave. For in the north Lægairé, the Triumphant, and Fergus Mac Lēda drave back the exiles, and here perpetually Læg heard the great voice of the grand-son[2] of Iliach shouting, and himself standing, and looking round, calling to his warriors; also, far away southward, he beheld Conaill, son of Amargin, and like a promontory, his nation stretched out into the overflowing numbers of the Tân, but in the centre the sons of Maga kept the battle even. Here, too, fought the great Queen of the Olnemacta, advancing through the host like a man of war, for not much below her knees descended her martial tunic; and she, standing erect in her chariot, advanced against the Ultonians; but before her, and around her, went giants, even the household troops of that mighty Queen, select warriors, to whom it was an easy thing to die before her eyes fighting in her defence. Thither Concobar despatched Conn Mac Morna, and Lewy, King of Firbolgs, also Follomain, and Fiecha Mac Mirna, the great speaker. But, on the other hand, Fergus Mac Roy let loose Fleeas, the wife of Aileel Finn, with her swift western battalions, the chivalry of the Gamanradians, and the Partree

[1] As the Red Branch descended into mid-Erin, two sons of Concobar went southwards towards Tara to meet Erc. The father of Erc was neutral in this war, though many of his subjects seem to have joined Queen Meave.

[2] Lægairé, son of Cónud, son of Iliach.

dwellers by the Suc, also Caibdeen Mac Lon-Cras, and Finn, his brother, fighting in the midst of their own realm. On the right wing and the left Conaill and Lægairé kept moving forward, driving before them the men of Meave, for like a ship which from its broad bows casts aside the billows impelled against wind and tide by the unseen might of rowing-men, so these matchless champions and their battalions kept piercing the host of Meave, dividing in sunder the great army of the Tân, but in the centre the battle was stayed. Here, like infuriated rams whose horns become entangled, the hosts were locked inextricably. Loud was the reverberation of arms and terrible, and like a glittering sea at noontide, was the flash here of swords and spears, and decorated gem-adornéd shields, but instead of shouts and battle-cries reigned an awful silence where, in a dread agony, heroes fought, and the war-spirit, voiceless, waxed intense and terrible.

Thither Fergus despatched then the household troops of Aileel, even the giants of the Queen's own household, under Oll and Okna,[1] and the sons of the king of "the brilliant district,"[2] also Bun and Mœn, two great western champions, and the two Cormacs, Cormac Mac Colba, and sluggish Cormac[3] the Plunderer, and the Ultonians gave way. But on the other side, the sons of Carbad rode thither, and springing from their chariots, fought around Erc, for they feared to return again to Rath Carbad reporting to the noble Acaill that they had seen her dear brother slain.

[1] These champions are represented as having wounded Cethern.

[2] Caillé. I can't tell why called the brilliant district, nor do I know its position.

[3] They are also represented as fighting with Cethern.

Then was it that the Dergtheena and Dairfeena, the Fir-morca,[1] and also the children of Ith,[2] with the southern Fir-bolgs, moved on into the centre of the battle, and Fergus, looking, saw the whole of the centre and the left centre and the right centre of the Ultonians confused. Therefore, through all the openings and weak places, he despatched swift squadrons, and they, breaking through, fought around the foss, eager to seize the gates. But from the centre before the principal gate, where stood the High King and his guards, came forth Buiney the Ruthless-Red, the deserting son of Fergus Mac Roy, and Owen, the great son of Durthect, king of the Fir-Manah, Gerg of Glen Gerg, Shencha, the broad-browed orator, not now with the Crave Ceol in his warlike hand, the two Roscathals, Condera, Iar, Nuada, Fiecha Mac Mirna, not now with great words eloquent, but with spear and mace, Mainey the bull-necked, son of Gergend, the sons of Dary, and Rōka, the beloved of Fionavar,[3] and Kelkar the great son of Uther.

Now sprang Fergus Mac Roy from his chariot, and with him went his comrades, the flower of the chivalry of the Olnemacta and of the Ultonian exiles. Like a black cloud charged with thunder advanced the great son of the Red Rossa, before him went terror, and desolation cried behind; Mac Nessa then let loose Cumáscra, that stammering child of the war-goddess[4] of Emain and Fallomān,

[1] These three were ancient warlike tribes of Munster.

[2] Ith, uncle of Milesius. His race powerful in the South of Ireland, but declined after the third century.

[3] All these were conspicuous characters amongst the Red Branch. An enquirer, reading from the Index, will find many circumstances recorded concerning them in O'Curry's Works. Rōka, Gælicé, Reochdidhe.

[4] Macha, the founderess of Emain Macha.

skilful in warlike wiles,[1] and Cethern, who with difficulty returned after having routed the battalion of Endee, and slain that prince, whom with his shield he cut in twain, and Lewy with the Ultonian Fir-bolgs, and the unconquered Fir-bolgs of the Isles.[2]

But meantime Cet pierced the Ultonian right centre, moving inward to the rampart, and on the wings the host of Meave poured round the horns of the Clanna Rury, seeking in vain to break through the heroic bands of Conaill on the south, and of Lægairé on the north; but in the left centre, Erc the Fair-haired, and Fiecha and Fiechna,[3] also Glas, Mainey, and Conairy, repelled the warriors of Meath and Bregia; for when he recognised the face of any king or conspicuous warrior, Erc shouted, and they gave way before the son of the King of Tara. Thither then, Fergus let loose Concobar the Red-browed, and the Ossorians and the chivalry of Garmān, once conquered by Cuculain and Fardia,[4] and most hostile to the Clanna Rury and to Erc; and the sons of Concobar were driven back. Then it was that Fergus Mac Roy himself moved out into the conflict. Like the mast of a ship was his spear, crested with shining brass; longer than an oar[5] was the sword-containing scabbard, which sprang and fell upon his mighty thigh as the hero rushed on into the battle. Before him divided the Dairtheena, and the Clanna Rury shouted, deeming that they gave way overpowered; but in that chasm, as in door

[1] He is represented as framing stratagems. He was slain by Cet.

[2] These were the Clan Humor already described.

[3] These youths, sons of Concobar, were personal friends of Erc. They went southwards to the Boyne to induce him to join them.

[4] See M. & C., Vol. III., p. 459.

[5] See M. & C., Vol. II., p. 298.

flung suddenly open, they beheld their ancient king and comrade, who, shouting terribly, laid waste their ranks.

Which seeing, the King of Ulla, even Concobar Mac Nessa, descended into the battle, terrible as a fiery meteor, going on straight to that point where, before Fergus, the armies of the Clanna Rury were confused. Him, as he went, Cet eyed narrowly, holding in his right hand what seemed a warrior's hand-stone. Nevertheless, not of flint or marble was that stone, but of hardened clay. But he fought further to the south, and he feared lest his cast should be in vain. Therefore he returned it to its place in the hollow shield.[1]

[1] It was by this ball that Concobar, according to the story, afterwards met his death. It was of hardened clay, mixed with the brains of Mesgæra, a great Leinster champion, slain by Conail Carna. It was taken from the armoury of Emain Macha, and given to Cet. There was a prophecy that by it only should Concobar be slain. In the age I am describing, every warrior went into battle with a stone fitted into the hollow of his shield. *Cf.* the multitudes of stones which seem to fly about in the battles round Ilium. It is probable that in the bardic literature from which Homer wrought the warrior's hand-stone played the same part as in ours, that Homer remarked allusions to its use, but did not perceive that it was part of the equipment of a warrior.

CHAPTER XX.

DEIRDRE REMEMBERED.

"And to be wroth with one we love,
Doth work like madness in the brain."

COLERIDGE.

Then cried Fergus:—

"Yonder cometh he who has banished us from Ulla, and made us exiles over the face of the earth. Sole monarch he of the Ultonians; and their tree springs green from the sacred soil of Emain, but we, torn from our roots, welter on tossing tides, a sport of the winds and waves. Strike now, O ye exiles of the Clanna Rury, and strike no more."

Then swept on the exiles, uplifted above the ground with passionate hatred, and so, with a crash on both sides, they closed. Then were heard the cries of warriors wounded unto death, and hoarse vengeful whisperings, and hisses, and the loud voice of authority, and the yells of those that triumphed. Like wheat from the walls of a chamber where the beater, on a smooth flagstone, beats out the flying grain that the straw, uninjured, may be used for the covering of a king's dûn, so perpetually, with bent points and broken staves, sprang back the spears of the Red Branch, rebounding from the mighty shield of Fergus, rattling in vain upon that impenetrable round. But in the tumult and the horror ever rose and descended, like a flaming portent,

the sword of Fergus, regarding not shield, or helmet, or leathern mail. It was fashioned by the hands of Manannān, and tempered in fires such as the sons of Milith never saw, and it was irrefragable and irresistible.[1]

Then against Fergus advanced a youth over-brave, and beyond all others ambitious of warlike renown. Fierce was that boy and reckless. Freckled his countenance—now pale and eager. He wore the bratta of a king, and around him fought mighty champions, deserters out of the Pillars of Temair. Between his two steeds he ran along the chariot pole, leaping far out in front, and advanced straight against Fergus, brandishing a long spear. He shouted as he ran. In his voice presumptuous youth was apparent, not the mature strengh of manhood, daring, yet circumspect. Ineffectual rang his spear on the great shield of Fergus, nevertheless, drawing his sword, the boy sprang against the champion of the Tân.

Then Fergus cried :—

"I know thee who thou art, Erc, son of Cairbry Niafar. My quarrel is not with thee, thou son of the King of Tara. Go back now, unharmed, for I will not hurt thee."

So saying, Fergus dashed his shield against the boy's breast, and he, stunned, fell backward with raised hands impotent, from which fell the gleaming sword, and the guards of Tara quickly withdrew him to where was his chariot.

But now, into the horrid spaces that surrounded the exile, there advanced a mighty champion, bearded, immense, whose eyes, dark blue, flashed beneath most

[1] There are extraordinary mythical stories concerning this sword.

noble brows, and in the centre of whose shield was there the likeness of a woman. He, from the hollow thereof, took out a massy pebble. Of dark marble, streaked with green, was that stone, with grooves for the fingers where the artist had indented it with his brazen chisel. Many a salt billow of the Moyle had rolled it over, for upon a narrow strand, over-hung by beetling cliffs, it had lain many ages upon the wild northern shore. It, the sons of the artist, going thither in boats, had removed, and when the artist had abraded and polished it he placed it, with many others, in his house, and he who now wielded the same had received it amongst his tributes.[1] Grasping this in his right hand, that warrior advanced upon Fergus and cast it at the exile. Loud then rang the shield of Fergus. In fragments, the stone rebounded from its impenetrable surface, but Fergus himself recoiling, fell on one knee, and his arm within the shield was, for a moment, stunned, but straightway recovering himself, he cried :—

" Who art thou that advancest through the flying Red Branch, like a flashing star through broken hurrying clouds in the wild night? Small love hast thou for thy life who darest to stand before me in this great battle of the Tán-bo-Cooalney. Mad warrior, who art thou?"

For, from his forehead, the running sweat had ob-

[1] *Cf.* Battle of Comar, M. and C.,Vol. II., p. 263. " There came not a man of Lothar's party without a Champion's Hand-Stone in the hollows of their bent shields." This Lothar was a brother of Queen Meave. The allusions are so frequent that I believe it to have been part of the equipment of a warrior in those ages. Homer, in composing the Iliad, seems to have not known this. Hence, we have the absurdity of that alluvial plain producing stones in any numbers that the exigency of battle and description required.

scured the sight of Fergus, and his face was bespattered with the blood of his own slain. Nevertheless, his eyes shone baleful beneath his warlike brows. But loud, on the other side, there answered him a fierce insulting voice :—

"One who cheated thee out of thy sovereignty when thou wast captain of the Red Branch, who slew the sons of Usna, surrounded by thy vain protection, who conquered thy rebel hosts in battle, who expelled thee like a wolf out of Ulla, and made thee an exile and a roamer, till thou hast become the servant of a woman, receiving unmanly wages from a lewd termagant. It is I who am upon thee this day, thou son of the Red Rossa, Concobar Mac Nessa Mac Factna, Ard-Rie of all Ulla."

But him Fergus answered with a hoarse response :—

"Full well I know thee, thou bright treachery. Yea, from the day that thou wast born I have known thee—to my sorrow and my great wrong. A speechless infant I have borne thee in my arms, and to please thee, a child, I submitted my mind to learn lying tales that I might rehearse them to thee clamorous for such things, and if at any time the spear of my brooch pierced thy hand—for very wayward and wanton wert thou—it was my hand that bound the tiny wound, and my voice that hushed thy childish cries, and many games and sleights-of-hand I taught thee, submitting to thy small imperious humour, while the warriors mocked. But after that, thy mind wandered from me, going after druids with their idle lore, and poets and lying chroniclers, and thou wast familiar with the base man and the coward, and talked wild unprincely words. Yea, too, from thy lips many a scornful taunt I heard, saying that I was no

king, but a mere fighter to be sent out on bloody business by one wiser than myself, differing in this much from thy nephew, the very affectionate son of Dectëra, and thou wentest out into unapprehended ways, so that not the wisest would guess unto what fate or with what thoughts thou didst live. As one who, from a mountain-top, sees far out at sea a ship with snow-white sails and flashing oars, and wonders to what nation and port it may be bound—and, as to one so watching, that ship puts in landward with its crew of savage pirates, and soon his lands are ravaged, and his cattle slain or carried away, and his wife and children taken captive, and the flames of his dear home lash the heavens with fiery whips, and thereafter nought is left to him but ashes and desolation; thus upon me, wondering at thy wayward course, thou didst descend, so that I am now at thy hands, from a prince in my native land, an exile and a wanderer, with my sons, receiving from a woman unmanly wages, and now no more is the sunlight to me a pleasant thing, and my soul within me is ashes, but with one red spark, O Concobar, one hope for which I live, and which the blessed gods have, at last, put within my reach. Raise now thy shield, thou son of Nessa, or I shall pierce thee through thy naked breast."

"To whom clave the son of Sualtam, O Fergus—to me or to thee? nor hast thou all the right in this deadly feud. Boast not thyself to me of a spirit in ruins, whose life-spring in its fountain thou in thy foul wantonness didst poison and pollute. Have I suffered naught, that thou shouldst vaunt thyself in woes above me. In my heart, too, are empty chambers, and I knock at doors which never shall be opened. To me the sun

at noon tide is black, and pale memories dim for me the banquet-hall, where feast my warriors and bards. Therefore talk not to me of wrongs, whose life has perished from the beginning, but let this day be the last of our bloody feud. Soon, I think, in the caves of the dead, will the sons of Usna rise up to receive thee."[1]

Thereat the son of Nessa raised his jewelled arm, and, brandishing, sent forth the long ashen-hafted spear. Harshly, then, rang the shield of Fergus, for he held it close against his breast, wherefore it vibrated not, but the spear-head was broken, and the mighty ashen-tree thereof splintered. Then met that giant twain with drawn swords in inextricable fight.

Afar stood the other knights and champions, while parleyed those great kings, magnanimous heroes abhorring treachery; but now, still further back they shrank, while that mighty ex-arch of the North contended with the Ard-Rie in deadly combat. Then, indeed, might no man, however quick of sight, distinguish the movements of them twain—panic-stricken as were all at that giant strife. For as the senses of men caught in the midst of a thunder-storm are confused when the blue, wild lightning is flashed into their eyes, and the crashing thunder bellows in their ears, so were they confused, and all their minds distraught. But amid the clang and clash, and the dark wild horror of the fray, a weird

[1] Concobar in this speech alludes to Deirdré, whom he loved, and who, according to some authorities, but these not the best, was his wife, before she fled with Naysi, son of Usna. Fergus seems to have abbetted the sons of Usna in that treachery, or, at all events, sympathised with them more than with the Ard-Rie. Vol. I., Chap. xxv.

note kept sounding, and a cry as of a woman crying in an agony, while Concobar reeled back before the wrath of Fergus, and the whole host heard it, and far away the mighty Lir moaned upon his strands, a warning to all Eiré, and the people of Emain Macha heard it, and the people of Tara. For the great Ard-Rie kept staggering towards the foss like one intoxicated, and fierce and swift descended the flashing sword of Fergus, while the monarch of the North reeled back into the caves of death, and it seemed that not even a god could be his salvation, or deliver him from the vengeful exile.

Then rang Cuculain's battle-cry across the plain.

CHAPTER XXI.

LU LAM-FADA MAC ÆTHLEEN.

"But a blast met them, *or* it was Cuculain."

ANCIENT BARD.[1]

Now meantime Læg, indignant, but with an impotent wrath, hastened from the tent-door of Cuculain to the rampart, and as hastily returned, or to the stable where were the war-steeds, and who, neighing, kept stamping, and pulled madly at their halters, or to the chariot-house, where the brass and gold of the chariot glowed like burning fire, instinct with a war-spirit, longing for the battle. Then, again, he hastened downwards, and stood upon the rampart hard by the gateway of the Clans of Murthemney, his soul confused with a blind rage, and past him, perpetually, there went ox-waggons

[1] From the Tan-boo-Cooalney.

laden with the wounded of the Clanna Rury, who groaned lying upon the blood-soaked rushes, and Læg stamped upon the rampart, and tore his auburn hair, and hastened again to the pavilion of his master, where Cuculain still slept. But Læg wondered when he saw him, for his countenance was fresh and fair, and nobler to look upon, and greater seemed the son of Sualtam than at any time since he had attained to manhood, and taken his place amongst the warriors of the Red Branch, and Læg longed to awake him, nevertheless he feared to break the geis. But as he stood at the door, he deemed that he heard voices speaking and conversing in low tones. Yet was there no one in the tent. Then Læg trembled, and a cold fear crept about the roots of his hair, and he hastened back again to the rampart.

But now Læg could no longer contain himself, and fiercely he inveighed against the wounded knights returning from that field of slaughter. For seeing the husband of Acaill, he cried :—

"Make haste, now, O Glan, son of Carbad. Charioteer, yon passage third from the east will lead thee soonest into the north. He desires to see see again his dear wife, Acaill. Heed not his wounds. They come opportunely to one hastening to his wife." [1]

And again—

"Is it thou, Cumascra[2] Mend Macha, thou of the

[1] Acaill was sister of Erc, and deeply atttached to the boy. "Her heart brake nut-wise in her breast" when she heard of his death. He was slain by Conaill Carna revenging Cuculain. As Acaill travelled to Tara they showed her his dissevered head. Her tomb at Skreen is near Tara. That of Erc is near it.

[2] He died of his wounds, which were inflicted by the Maineys. Conaill Carma's wife was Loncada.

stammering tongue and hesitating hand. Brave son of Concobar, I welcome thee returning victorious from the battle."

And to Yeoha Ec-beul, father-in-law of Conaill Carna—

"Neigh, horse-mouth. Much provender awaits thee in Ultonian stables. Stained is thy green bratta, but within thy skin is clean. Fear not, O valiant hare, how nobly dost thou fly before the dogs of the Olnemacta!"

So roared Læg, mad with shame and wrath; but meantime, the great host of the Four Provinces was submerging the Clanna Rury. For as of those who all night long contend with the powers of wind and sea, and they hope that the day may bring some relief; but in the grey tempestuous dawn, the sea breaks through their riven timbers, and the light of life goes down into darkness and the grave; such then was the anguish of the Clanna Rury; but no coward hearts were their's, bard-nourished champions, devoid of fear. For amid the deafening din of the brazen deluge immersing fought on in silence the scattered fragments of the Red Branch —branch now stripped by the wild winds of war—the Clanna Rury, breathing fierce breath, terrible in that dread moment.

Like the arms of some great bay or harbour, there stretched forth into the plain, piercing the multitude of the Tàn, the battalions of two matchless champions, of Conaill, son of Amargin, on the south, and of Lægairé Buada on the north. But far other than a peaceful haven was the wild expanse which they enclosed, rolled over by the waves of war, bright with the stress of battle, loud with the crash of meeting hosts, the clang and

reverberation of smitten brass. And now all hope was taken away, for the battalions of the Red Branch were isolated in the midst of the plain, and between them many a rapid cohort of the spearmen of the Queen, and many a swift squadron of her chivalry had rushed, running straight or aslant, according as the they had opportunity, and they were seizing the gates all along the right centre and the left centre, while in the centre the the Ard-Ries fought, and the King of Ulla, being overpowered, kept retreating to the rampart.

At every gateway there was a bridge that crossed the trench, for the stems of trees were extended from bank to bank, and upon them lay others, lying transverse and close together, across which the chariots and the men of war went forth to battle. At each of these gates was stationed a company of warriors, whose duty it was to remove the bridge what time the last of the Clanna Rury should be received within the rampart, in case of disaster, and to cast into the gateway trees, with all their branches, the leafy tops having been removed, an effectual defence by reason of the crooked pointed limbs. Also, they purposed to run the smooth stems of fir-trees through the forks on the inside of the ramparts, so that none from without might remove them, strong though the assailing warriors might be and daring. This at some of the gateways those within did, when the men of Meave had destroyed the bridges; but at others, the Clanna Rury issuing forth, fought in defence of the bridges.

All this time the star of Emain Macha grew pale. One by one, like lights in a king's banqueting-hall, after the guests have departed, when the slaves go about

and extinguish them, so one by one went down the battle-standards of the Clanna Rury over the plain.

Still hard by the great central gate, and on the right of where the Ard-Ries fought, floated the Red Hand of Emain Macha, and around it silent, terrible, fought the bravest of the Clanna Rury, and thither collected the remnants of every shattered battalion, if by any means they could escape thither, when their cohorts were broken and dissipated by the mighty men of Meave.

And now, too, there were strange shapes[1] seen, and dim discerned abominable forms, and shrieks, and horrid laughter, as of those who laughing yell in the insane house, for out of darkness infernal and the caves of death, where Destruction, wandering, cries amid the darkness to his children, and summons round him the hosts of hell, they arose, passing through the maddened souls of men, and were seen visibly in the light of day—withered, blasted faces, unclean doleful shapes, as of men and women, and where the slaughter was greatest they danced, and raised in their accursed hands the hot blood of heroes with horrid yells. The bauves were there, and the wives of Ned[2] reeled amid the carnage; but

[1] These shapes, according to the ancient Irish bards, appeared visibly after all great battles. Of the Tuátha Dē Danān there were two divisions corresponding to the angels and devils of mediæval times. Thus the step-mother of the Children of Lir, who transformed them into swans, was expelled by the gods from their company, and converted into a demon of the air. See "Children of Lir, New Atlantis."

[2] This is the old primæval war-god, Ned = slaughter. He does not seem in the existing heroic literature to be a distinct character, but more of the nature of a pervading personality, though I believe he was different in the more remote lost literature. His wives were Fea and Neman. See Article on the Mōr Reega, *Revue Celtique.*

far thence fled bright Angus[1] before that ghastly brood, fair god of the silver-winding Boyne, to thee dearer the music of thy own sweet stream, where beneath Slane it chimes over its pebbly bed, and thy green palace[2] over against Ros-na-Ree,[3] and sweeter than all strife the melody of thy stricken lute, or lovers' talk beneath the evening star.

It was about this time that to Cuculain, sleeping, there appeared a vision. Before him stood the form of a mighty warrior equipped as if for battle. A bratta of green silk he wore, fastened by a golden brooch, and from his countenance a light shone. With deep marvellous eyes he gazed upon the hero.

And Cuculain, trembling, said :—

"I know thee who thou art, O Ioldana.[4] Signifying what hast thou come up out of the realms of the unseen."

But that other answered, and his voice was low and grave, musical as the deep strings of the harp, and deep and terrible like the voice of the great sea :—

[1] For Angus, see p. 71. In the third century (the old faith then weakening before the stress of Roman Civilization in the adjoining country, and the introduction of Christianity), Cormac Mac Art denied his existence. But the god appeared to him at Tara in the gloaming, having in his hands the traditional tympan. Irish historians have asserted that Cormac Mac Art was a Christian. He is represented as having been murdered by the druids. Angus accompanied Queen Meave on this expedition.

[2] This is the great Rath of New Grange, sacred to the Dagda (Zeus) and also to Angus.

[3] Ros-na-Ree was a great Pagan cemetery, on the southern bank of the Boyne.

[4] This was the surname of Lu Lam-fada, *i.e.*, Lu the Long-Handed, and indicates the belief that he was the source of the arts. It was he who delivered the gods from Fomorian tyranny.

"Awake now, O Setanta, and go forth to war, for thy people summon thee to deliver them. Fear not the powers of earth and hell, for I am ever around thee. I have relaxed upon thee the oppression of the Clan Cailitin,[1] and healed thy many wounds, and restored thee to thy ancient prowess, therefore, thou shalt go boldly against hundreds, and battalions shall not put thee to flight. Moreover, I have poured a magic mist around thee, so that thou shalt seem greater than human, with Panic in front of thee, and Terror issuing out of thy countenance. The Clan Cailitin will come against thee, and the Mōr Reega will for the last time embattle herself against thee. Fear not them nor her, for those thou shalt destroy, and after that no magic arts shall be powerful to hurt thee, and her thou shalt conquer, so that henceforward she will be thy lover and thy protectress. Nevertheless, few indeed shall thy years be, but while time lasts thy glory shall endure, and thy name shall be known unto the earth's ends. Nor shall thy death come suddenly or without warning. Thou shalt hear Mac Mánar and see Rod,[2] and it is the remnant of the Clan Cailitin who will destroy thee."[3]

Then the divine voice ceased, and Cuculain, awaking, beheld Læg in the doorway, and heard the roar of the magic amulet, and the moaning of the sea and the triumphant shouts of the Four Provinces. Thereat, a fierce wrath filled all his veins, and he sprang swiftly from his couch and put on his battle harness.

[1] It was not until Cuculain destroyed this clan that he became invincible. See "Great Breach of Murthemney," Crowe MSS.

[2] These were gods who announced death to heroes.

[3] Vide supra, the six children of Cailitin who came not to the war.

First, a soft, linen lēna, of twenty-seven folds, next his skin, that his armour might not abrade it, and over that his battle-shirt Seven-fold was that shirt, of seasoned leather, cut from the hide of wild-bulls. It descended upon his thighs, but from the hips downwards it was slashed, in order that it might not inconvenience him in running, and Læg fastened the clasps of glittering find-ruiné. Then, around his waist Læg clasped the waist-piece, also seven-fold, where more than elsewhere the warrior needs protection. After that, Cuculain put on his outer lēna of very fine linen, bordered at the collar and at the extremities with golden thread, and upon which Emer had wrought many fair embroidered forms, and it descended to his white strong knees; also, Læg strapped on his sandals,[1] winding over ankle and instep the pliant strap, and, though in haste, turned down the ends under the loop, after which he despatched Læg to yoke the war-horses, but he himself fastened his hair with a golden clasp[2] that it might not be spread around his face in the battle. Over his right shoulder he cast his sword-belt, the belt that sustained Cruaideen, and round his waist his girdle, and therein he slung his mace and his brazen colg, and fitted thereto the leathern satchel filled with balls of iron. Over his shoulders, too, he cast his bratta of crimson silk, and in front it was firm and close to his figure, but loose behind his back, and he fastened it upon his breast with a wheel-brooch of shining gold. Then upon his head he set his brazen helmet lined with soft doeskin; but while he armed himself might be heard

[1] For the use of sandals see Adamnan. Shoes, ornamented with meta work, are mentioned even in the most ancient literature.

[2] M. and C., Vol. III., chap. xxviii.

distinctly the beating of his heart, and with difficulty might a man distinguish his motions, so swiftly did he move his nimble hands. Last of all he took his shield, passing his left arm through the loop, and took hold of the strong handle, and in his left hand seized the Gæ Bolg, which none else in Erin might wield, and in his right the Crann-tawl; of red yew was that sling, thicker than a man's wrist, and the string thereof was of twisted wires of findruiney. It was a geis[1] to him that he should miss any cast with that sling.

Then sprang forth from the tent the son of Sualtam; and when he saw the plain, and the Red Branch routed, a fell rage grew to madness within him, and a cry from unseen mouths arose around him as he ran. Moreover, the son of Lir, the mighty genius[2] of the storm-swept promontories of the sea, waved above him his magic wand, and transformed him as he ran past Læg and his horses, and sprang to the summit of the rampart. There he shouted the battle cry of the clans of Ulla. Terribly then rang the voice of Cuculain across the battle.

[1] The first intimation to Cuculain of his approaching death was his failure with the sling. For the arming of Cuculain see T. B. C., p. 183; also M. and C., Vol. III., p. 447.

[2] This was Mananān, the most potent as well as the most spiritual and remote of the gods. For his relations with Cuculain, see T. B. C., p. 183, and the "Sick-bed of Cuculain," New Atlantis.

CHAPTER XXII.

'Αριστεία CONCULAIN.

"Is this the undefiléd hound
Whom thou callest the life of the Ultonians."[1]

"I foretold last year
That there would come an herioc Hound—
The Hound of Emain Macha."[2]

"He had not a boasting word,
Nor vaunted he at all,
Though marvellous were his deeds."[3]

"They called for his thunder-feats."[4]

It was then that Fer-lōga announced his coming to Aileel, and Aileel prophesied from him the defeat of the mighty host which Queen Meave had gathered out of the four provinces.

But he, Cuculain, the son of Sualtam, stood afar upon the rampart of the Clanna Rury, a portent of war clear seen like flame against the dark western clouds, terrible in his beauty, and his voice rang across the battle like the shout of a battalion, or the sound of some mighty trumpet explored by the blasting of the breath of a giant. As when mariners in the western main plying southwards past Dûn-na-m-arc and the House[5] of Donn,

[1] T. B. C., p. 110. [2] National MSS., Vol. II., p. 32.
[3] T. B. C., p. 18. [4] T. B. C.
[5] On the Kerry Coast, see Keating at Milesian invasion.

whose ship the tempest shakes, and the wild billows buffet; and they, in the darkness and the storm, hear around them the thunder of the waves upon iron coasts, who, being impotent, anticipate certain death; and as when, to them rounding suddenly and unawares some concealing promontory, there shines far away the ship-protecting light which crowns that black rock that was the grave of Iar,[1] and afar over the tossing waters there streams the glorious ray. So welcome and so glorious, to the beaten Red Branch, whom death and despair now encompassed, over whom rolled the wild waves of war, and the brazen billows of the Tân, appeared far away, westwards, the coming of the son of Sualtam, and the pealing of his war-shout afar on the edge of the battle. Silent then as the grave, and still while one might count five, became the whole of that war-swept plain, and straightway, with a heaven-ascending shout, the Clanna Rury sprang triumphant upon their foes.

Then shouted Cuculain, looking southwards:—

"Go back, thou son of Rossa Roe. I, too, once fled from thee, though swordless.[2] Go back! contend no more against the Clanna Rury, for surely if I meet thee in the battle I shall slay thee."

For Fergus had gone nigh unto slaying the Ard-Rie of all Ulla; but when he heard the voice of Cuculain he stood a moment in amazement, holding his bloody sword in his hand. Then slowly he retreated into the ranks of the Olnemacta. Him too Cormac Conlingas with-

[1] Iar, son of Milesius, wrecked on Skelig Michæl, now the Skelig. See Vol. I., p. 73.

[2] This relates to a circumstance which took place in the skirmishes prior to the single combats on the Avon Dia.]

drew, having hastened thither from the north to save his father's life.[1]

But Cuculain, planting his great spear in the ground, drew his sling and fitted thereto an iron bolt, where thong and timber joined. Into the loop he passed his thumb, and bent the crann-tawl[2] upon his right knee, gazing, as he bent, upon where the remnant of the nations of Cooalney and Murthemney were overborne by the sons of Lon-Cras. Of them two were in front of the others, Finn, the fourth son of Lon-Cras, and Caibdeen[3] the sixth. Lords were they of Teffia, ruling over many tribes, and at that moment Finn had his mace raised in the act of striking one of the vassals of Cuculain. But ere the blow descended, Cuculain slang. Like the sound of a gong was the back-springing sling, and like a fierce blast so hissed the twisted thong of the crann-tawl, and the deadly bolt sped afar. There fell Finn, who had that day slain many of the people of Cuculain, smitten through shield and breast by the unerring missile. Further north, his brother Caibdeen, in his chariot, galloped past a battalion of Cuculain's people, who, having been thrown into confusion, were pressed close together, and unable to wield their weapons. Along the edge of the disordered mass the scythe of that warrior's chariot share the helpless warriors, guided deftly by the charioteer, but Caibdeen himself stood erect in the chariot, protecting the charioteer with his shield, when once more the crann-tawl sounded. The second bolt smote the left-hand steed in the forehead,

[1] T. B. C., p. 356, *et seq.* [2] Gælicé, Crann-tabaill.
[3] R. I. A., XXIII.; E., IV., p. 185.

who, plunging forward, fell, and the chariot was overturned, and those within it rolled forth upon the plain; but as Caibdeen was rising from the ground, Cuculain struck him, and the iron missile passed quite through his head, from the left temple to the right. Then retreated the sons of Lon-Cras and their nation, and Cuculain's people, with a shout, went forward.

Swifter than words can tell was the slinging of Cuculain, nor might a man discern the rapid movements of his hands, but ever flashed afar the sweep of that bright sling, and ever hissed the sling-thong through the air.

Then, too, was it that seeing Dûvac Dæl Ulla, who had gotten to the rear of Lægairé Buada, and was bursting the left flank of his battalion, seeking to break through to hold the rampart and the gates, Cuculain cried:—

"O Dûvac, thou reptile[1] that rendest in the rear of the host, desist now straightway, or it will be thy death."

Now Cuculain and Dûvac had been school-fellows; and he, fearing, hastened back to where was his chariot, dreading the wrath of the far-casting son of Sualtam.

[1] This was an allusion to his surname "Dæl." See T. B. C., p. 193. Later on in the battle Dûvac proposed treacherously to Queen Meave that the host should flee southwards, and having drawn Cuculain beyond the Red Branch, surround and slay him. Fergus, hearing this, rushed towards him, and as Dûvac turned to fly, Fergus, with an indignation not too highly to be commended, but with an energy somewhat unkingly, administered a kick of a rather peculiar nature. He planted his two feet in his back sending him forward a hundred yards across the plain. The reader will perceive how in this most characteristic action Fergus tempered justice with mercy, for he might have delivered a kick which would have been far more painful.

Northwards then slang Cuculain where, the Maineys of the Sea-board were routing the nations of Fergus Mac Lēda, and of these he slew three in succession, giving relief to the Ultonians; and there, too, Fergus Mac Lēda again dashed forward against the men of Meave. Also, on the extreme edge of the battle, northward, he slew three men of great stature, whose names are not recorded. He confused, too, the Clan Tomalta, conspicuous with their blood-red armour and accoutrements, and the Clan Guairé, who fought with great spears ending in a triple prong, and a nation whose name is not recorded, but whose warriors were all armed with battle maces of bright brass.[1] Also he confused and routed the Clan Sibna, and the Clan Murdoc, and the sons of Talc, and he slew three dark-browèd nobles of the children of Sealan.

So Cuculain kept perpetually slinging; and wherever he saw the Ultonians overpowered, at that point he continually slang, shooting over the heads of the Clanna Rury, and the men of Meave kept falling, and the distress of the Ultonians was relieved, and the severe pressure of the foe was relaxed. Moreover, at the appearance of Cuculain, all who fought about the gateways in the left centre of the embankment had themselves retreated; nevertheless, many of them were intercepted by the Clanna Rury and slain, who, now released from stress of battle on the front, faced round against those who had gotten in their rear.

But meantime Læg had harnessed the horses and

[1] For these heroes, and their destruction by Cuculain, see T. B. C. pp. 351 and 352.

yoked the chariot, and he sprang thereinto, and guided the steeds straight to the entrance in front of where they were, beside which entrance, upon the right, Cuculain stood slinging. Loud then shouted Læg to those at the entrance, who were preparing to reconstruct the bridge over the foss, and they opened to the right hand and the left. For Læg had leaped into his place in the chariot, and with difficulty did he keep his footing, so wild and unmanageable were the steeds, swifter than the swiftest horses in the chariot race contending for the victory, so eager were they to enter into the battle.

Now Cuculain heard the mighty roar of the revolving wheels, and the thunder of the trampling of the steeds, nevertheless, once again he slang, and struck the foremost champion of the Clan Yeoha[1] of Loch Erne, for they were of the army of Meave, though they meared with the western Ultonians, and he snatched his spear from the ground, preparing to spring into the chariot. Straightforward then rushed the steeds, raging for the battle, and with the chariot they cleared the deep wide foss, twenty feet was it in breadth from bank to bank; but hardly had they alighted with a mighty crash on the further bank, when Cuculain stood by the side of Læg, having bounded from the lofty rampart, and once more he shouted, and once more the host of Meave was confused, and the Red Branch dashed upon them dealing death.

Then, indeed, few were the champions of the world who would have faced the son of Sualtam, whom merely to behold, men trembled, for there was Panic in front of him, and Terror issued out of his countenance; and he

[1] T. B. C., p. 352.

ran out upon the chariot-pole of the chariot, and stood with one foot on the pole and one on the back of the Liath Macha, and laughed in the fierceness of his wrath, for not like a mortal fighter was the hero that day, but like a genius of war. Long had they laid the hero under spells, fairy-stricken and enfeebled, by the force of druidic arts.[1] But now, as out of the caves of death, he arose again in his invincible might, shaking off that magic sorrow and the oppression of the enchanters. Then flapped his warlike tresses, even as a sail flaps, sharp-sounding in the blast, and he quaked in his anger like a bulrush in the river, when swollen by spring rain the brown torrent rushes headlong to the sea. Out of his countenance there went as it were lightnings, and showers of deadly stars rained forth from the dark western clouds above his head, and there was a sound as of thunder around him, and cries not his own coming from unseen mouths, and dreadful faces came and went upon the wind, and visages not seen in Erin for a thousand years were present around the hero that day, and there was a clamour as of a multitude following behind, when the son of Sualtam went forth into the great battle.[2]

Loud then pealed the voice of the Hound, for with his the Ioldāna mingled his voice of power, as then, when at Moy Tura, he brake the ranks of the Fomorian giants. Then sprang Queen Meave from her chariot, and fled away upon her feet; then were the Maineys confused, and Cet, with the chivalry of Moyrisk, swerved

[1] For the oppression of Cuculain by Cailitin and his sons, see R. I. A., XXIII., E. IV., p. 185.

[2] See T. B. C., circa p. 200.

southwards; then were the war-horses of the Tân terrified, and the familiar spirits of Queen Meave put to flight.

Moreover, as they went, Læg ran out in front the great chariot-spear, through its loops beneath the pole, and made it fast at his feet with the brazen clasp; and with a lever on the right hand and the left, he unfolded the battalion-rending scythes, to see if they would work freely, so that like some vast bird of war, with outstretched glittering wings, that chariot seemed to skim the ground.

Now was it that, from their lethargic rest, awaked the earth-demons, even the nether gods, through whose dark chambers sub-terrene echoed the thunder of the war-steeds' hoofs, and the roof of whose dûn profound was shaken with a mighty oscillation. Loud then through the realms of gloom reverberated the voice of Orchil, the sorceress, summoning Fovart and her sisterhood of the deep, a dim consistory, and the earth-fiends arose against the son of Sualtam. Like the billows of the sea, the firm plain uplifted itself against Cuculain, so that the chariot-wheels sank into the ground, and the hoofs of the horses were impeded and their progress was retarded, and their draught distressing. Which seeing, Cuculain addressed his steed, and he said:—

"O Liath Macha, it was not thus that thou didst bear into battle thy divine mistress what time she went out against the Fomoroh, but swiftly through wet places and dry, thou didst urge thy course; and, O Liath Macha, the eyes of all Erin are upon thee and me this day."

Thereat the noble spirit of the Liath Macha was grieved, and against the yoke mightly he bent his broad chest with the strength of twenty horses, and out of the earth by main force he drew black Shanglan and the war-car, and then those peerless horses exerted their terrible strength, and through marble and whinstone crashed the revolving wheels of the war-car as the great steeds went on. Behind them the track of the chariot-wheels was like the mearing of a territory. Then saddened and astonished, the earth-demons sank into their deep abode, and again Læg urged on the steeds of Cuculain straightforward into the thickest throng of the battle.[1]

Far out in front of the chariot then sprang Cuculain, holding the Gae-Bolg in his right hand, and before him the Clanna Rury divided to the right and to the left, for here they were again retreating before the men of Meave. First, then, Cuculain slew a mighty champion of the Dergtheena, a prince among the nation of Curoi Mac Dary, who from their great Dûn in the hills of Slieve Mish ruled a wide territory. Him holding the battle-plough[2] of the Roscathals Cuculain smote through the shield and the left breast, for on his arm the shield still lay, while with mighty hands he grasped the iron-work of that warlike instrument. Then it was that

[1] For the rising of the earth fiends see T. B. C., p. 188. Compare the elemental forces that waged war on Achilles in a situation somewhat similar, when the rivers poured forth floods of water and silt against him.

[2] T. B. C., p. 338. There is an allusion here to some warlike instrument which our antiquarians have yet failed to describe. It seems to be alluded to also in a description of the Dagda, M. & C., Vol. I., p. 611.

Cuculain saw Lewy Mac Conroi, who was hesitating in his heroic mind whether he would advance against Cuculain, in protection of his people, and meet at his hands a hero's death, and test that dim southern prophecy which said that by his hands should fall the Hound of Emain Macha.

But as he deliberated, Cuculain, seeing him, said:—

"O Lewy Mac Conroi, submit thyself now to me and I will not hurt thee. I have slain thy father, and will not slay thee."

Loud then in reply rang the spear of the southern hero on Fabâne. Nevertheless, though mighty was the strength of the great son of Curoi Mac Dary, harmless with bent point and splintered tree rebounded the spear of the warrior.

Then ran forward Cuculain, and disarmed him with his irresistible hands, and the companions of Cuculain took him captive.

After that Cuculain slew two other of the champions of that nation, and before him dispersed the Clans[1] of Slieve Mish. Also he routed the descendants of the ancient Lúhara, who dwelt by the hill-enfolden lakes of Locha Lein,[2] and thence southwards to Inver Scēna and were surnamed the Flaming; also, a strong battalion from Assaroe, where their territory meared with the Ultonians, and the children of Lægairey, of the Bloody Altars. So Cuculain routed all the left centre of the host of Meave, and, standing, beckoned Læg to approach. Bright then with the light of valour was the countenance of Cuculain, as he sprang into the chariot

[1] For these achievements see T. B. C., p. 351.

[2] The lakes of Len, *i.e.*, the fairy gold-smith, now lakes of Killarney.

beside Læg, and sent forth his taunts against the Olnemacta, exulting in his invincible prowess, for not yet was his manhood confirmed, but such was his age, as when youth and manhood join, and still untouched by the razor were his lips, and, for all his heroic greatness, the unbridled wantonness of youth was strong within him. Moreover, now he had saved the life of his king, and repelled Dûvac Dæi Ulla on the north, and had routed the battalions of Meave over all the left centre of the Clanna Rury, and there gathered round him, and after him his ancient comrades, and schoolfellows, and dear friends, and the remnant of the Clans of Coo-alney and Murthemney, who were subject unto him, and loved him, and a warlike glee and wanton exhilaration filled his spirit. Therefore, when he stood beside Læg in the chariot, he said :—

"Guide now the steeds to the right centre of the battle. And this shall be as it were a race of chariots at Tailteen; so shall I mock and deride the host of the Four Provinces. Therefore, give to me my balls[1] of jugglery."

And Læg said :—

"Thou art a witless idiot, O Setanta. Is this a time to indulge thy mad freaks, when the Olnemacta are routing the Ultonians over all the right centre. If thou carest not for thyself have at least a care for thy charioteer, who, shieldless, has no protection save what lies in thy skill and warlike prudence, of which right little

[1] T. B. C., p. 147; *Cf.* also New Atlantis, Vol. II., p. 111. With this incontinence of youth and bravery, compare the conduct of that French knight, who rode into the Battle of Hastings singing a love-ballad, and tossing his sword into the air.

dost thou possess. Verily, if I return to Emain Macha in safety, never more will I be charioteer of thine. Truly my brothers[1] made a wiser choice.

And Cuculain answered:—

"When I took thee to be my charioteer, O Læg, I then said—'Not beside me or over me shalt thou be smitten by a hostile weapon, but through me;' and in our many battles, hast thou ever yet received any wound?"

Then was the mind of Læg troubled when he remembered the never-failing care with which his master watched over him in danger, and he gave Cuculain the balls of glittering brass, and urged on the steeds. Across the plain then they flew, between the Clanna Rury and the Olnemacta, and where they went the men of Meave shrank away. Through a field of slaughter dashed then the war-car, and over the mangled bodies of heroes, and the blood bespattered the war-car, and reddened the tires of the wheels and the spokes. But above the head of Cuculain there was as it were a bright circle, so did he with a single hand cause those eight balls to revolve, watching warily, nevertheless, lest a spear or a bolt from the men of Meave should smite his charioteer or himself, and the Clanna Rury laughed when they beheld him; and afar off Concobar Mac Nessa, wounded, but vigilant, watched his career and antic feats—but the men of Meave were the more terrified.

Nevertheless there came out a great champion of the Olnemacta, and he said that now surely would the Hound fall at his hands, and that he would acquire great renown. Therefore, when Cuculain was looking

[1] Id, charioteer of Conaill Carna, and Sheeling of Lægairé Buada.

southwards and upwards, he ran forward from the Olnemacian ranks to slay Cuculain as he passed. But Cuculain, not turning his head aside, but looking straight before him, darted one of the eight balls through his brain, and continued his juggler's wheel with seven.

"I swear the oath of my territories, O Setanta," cried Læg, "that a prettier feat of war thou hast never yet performed."

Now the name of the slain man was Cuir,[1] the son of Dalot.

Then Cuculain cast the balls high aloft, and as they fell, dropped them one by one into their place, and he changed the Gae-Bolg from the left hand to the right and again sprang forth upon the chariot-pole. It was then that Cuculain heard sobbing voices and a sound of the muffled lamentation[2] of women, and he said:—

"O Fathâne and Colla, why do you weep? My end is not yet. I shall this day advance the Red Hand of my nation over all the nations of Eiré, and I shall cause to flourish the fair fields of Ulla. Why do you weep?"

And there answered him voices out of the air:—

"Like a child playing on a tide-surrounded isle art thou this day, O Setanta, upon whom night descends, and the great sea arises irreversible with mutterings and noises, and hungry eyes glare around him from the deep. Against thee now the mighty Cailitin and his wizard sons embattle themselves. Nations they have ruined, and kingdoms made desolate. Yea, against them the high gods wage vain war. As the bright wave, foam-crested, glittering, which the hollow cavern, loud with

[1] T. B. C., p. 147. [2] T. B. C., p. 344.

fearsome echoes, and peopled with abominable shapes, draws within its depths, so shalt thou descend into their pit. Go not southwards, Cuculain. Stay now thy destroying hand, and let the Clanna Rury work their own salvation."

And Cuculain answered :—

"Surely I shall go southwards, O fairy queens. Not to husband ignobly for my own pleasure have I this great strength which lives within me to-day. Now am I not my own, but I am sent forth by unseen kings, and whither they guide me I will go."

Swifter than hawks then southward flew the steeds of Cuculain, and before him the men of Meave fled to the camp. Clear seen from afar stood the son of Sualtam, the destroying hawk of the Tân, speeding southwards to where, in the right centre, still raged the hottest battle, and there, like clashing tides, the Olnemacta and the Red Branch contended. Then was it that the Clan Cailitin embattled themselves against Cuculain.

Meantime the son of Sualtam had sprung out in front of the chariot, advancing against the men of Meave, but there withstood him Fræch, the son of Fiach, advancing through the ranks of the Olnemacta.

Glorious indeed was the appearance of that hero. With a tinkling he ran through the host, for on his spear there were rings that rang forth a sweet faint melody as he ran. He it was who had come to Rath Cruhane as a suitor of Fionavar, leading in his train those weird harpers of whom men often spake, but never before saw. Vain then and since had been his suit, though he boasted that his mother was the goddess Bē-bind. Musically now over the shoulder of Cuculain

rushed the spear of the western champion, but in return Cuculain pierced him through the very boss of the shield, and through the middle of his breast where the breast bones join.[1]

After that there[2] came against him Lon, and Uala, and Dil, and along with them three warrioresses. All these practised druidic arts, but their arts availed not against Cuculain, and he slew them all with the Gæ-Bolg and with Cruaideen. Then it was that the dear son of delicate Uala[3] ran forward to avenge his father, but his courage fell when he saw the giant spear of Cuculain dropping blood, and beside it the face of the hero, haggard, terrible, raging in his destructive wrath, and quickly he shrank back amongst the ranks of the Olnemacta.

There Cuculain routed the host of Meave on the right centre of the Ultonians, and kept moving southwards to meet Conaill. From him Cet and the sons of Maga retreated. Bravest he in all Erin after the son of Sualtam, nevertheless he and his brethren went back before Cuculain, which to him was the most renowned of his achievements. Nevertheless, there came against him two warrior druids, Imræn[4] and Imroe, trusting in their magic

[1] T. B. C., p. 213. For the history of this remarkable champion, see M. & C., Vol. III., p. 219. Bē-bind was sister of the goddess who gave her name to the Boyne, Boanda, wife of Nuáda the Silver-handed. The poetical name of the Boyne was "the arm of the wife of Nuáda," either because her arm was beautiful, or because, as some say, she wore so many bracelets upon it for presentation to bards. This river, like the Shannon, sprang from a mysterious well upon whose sacredness she intruded. The remainder of the legend is similar to that related in Vol. I., Chap. xxvi.

[2] *Id.*, 96. [3] *Id.*, 51. [4] T. B. C., p. 105.

power, but they were slain by the son of Sualtam and by Lu Mac Æthleen.

Meantime Læg kept moving after him, not silently, for while Cuculain was routing the foe, Læg perpetually shouted. Then returned the warrior to his chariot; around his lips there was a foam, and from his forehead down upon his neck the great veins had swollen out like ropes. Thereafter Læg unfolded the left scythe and charged southwards, and where he went the battalions of Meave were confused, and chariots and fighting men were cast in heaps, and rolled over one another inextricable.

Which seeing a brave southern hero, Liathān[1] said to his charioteer:—

"O Mulcha, let us stay now this destroying hawk. The hero does not live who can meet him in single combat; but come now, charge against his chariot, and haply in the confusion I may find an opportunity to slay him."

Then the charioteer gave reins to his steeds; and, on the other side, Læg, being very wary and vigilant, and looking all round under the borders of Fabâne, saw him, and calling to Cuculain, gave rein to the steeds. Like thunder was the roar of the wheels on both sides, and the trampling of the galloping steeds as they closed, and elsewhere the battle was still while the chariots drew nigh. But Læg kept perpetually guiding the chariot-spear, so that it might pierce the breasts of one of the steeds; and Mulcha, on the other side, guided so as to avoid it, for of glittering brass it extended in front of the chariot-pole. But as they closed, the horses of

[1] *Id.*, 98.

Cuculain rose against the others, and trampled them into the ground, and passed over them, and the great war-car crushed like rotten timber the chariot of Liathān, and that warrior was slain by his own chariot, and by the trampling of Cuculain's steeds.[1] Then Cuculain made much of his horses, and said :—

" O Liath Macha, thou hast not done a more gallant deed since the day that thou slewest the steed of Ercoill, on that day when we went to be judged by him, and all others fled before him and his terrible fire-breathing steed."[2]

So they went southwards, and Cuculain lifted up his voice, and Conaill answered, for he was much exhausted fighting all day against the great southern nations under Cathīr, son of Eterskel, and Cairbré the fair and great. Seeing Cuculain, the great son of Conairy Mōr leaped from his chariot, and his brother, Oblinni, whose foot was yet unhealed, guarded the steeds. Him Cuculain missed, and the spear stuck trembling in the ground behind; but ere the Southern could cast, Cuculain sprang upon him with his battle-mace. With the first blow he stunned his arm within the shield, and with the second he slew him. He also slew Oball his brother, who endeavoured to draw the spear from the ground. For he and Oblinni struggled with it, endeavouring to withdraw it and retreat amongst the ranks of the Clan Dēga. Them Cuculain slew—a cause of great grief in the south of Erin.[3] Here with his battle-mace he routed

[1] Around this hero there was a weird music, for Genii from Assaroe accompanied him; but Lu Lamfáda rendered them powerless.

[2] See Feast of Bricrind.

[3] They are alluded to in Vol. I., p. 104.

the nations of the Ernai, also the men of Hirna, whose footmen were swifter than their chivalry, and the nations of Boirné, until fair-visaged Corc[1] gave hostages to the Clanna Rury, for the conquered appealed not in vain to Cuculain for mercy. There, too, against Cuculain came an ancient comrade, Fir-bē, a prince of the Olnemacta. With 505 warriors he had come to the hosting, and Cuculain, enraged, cast his spear lengthwise at him and slew him, for the mighty beam struck him in the mouth and brake all his jaws.[2]

Then sounded in the ear of Cuculain a voice which he knew, and it said :—

"Now, O Setanta, strengthen thyself, for against thee the powers of hell embattle themselves. Hid in dark clouds Cailitin and his mighty brood are upon thee."

But Cuculain looked up, and he saw a darkness moving towards him from the camp of Meave, and a deadly chill transfixed his heart as he looked, and a wild horror overspread his face. And again the Ioldāna spake :—

"Not alone for the Red Branch shalt thou now fight, but for all the nations of Eiré, who, thee beaten, will no longer yield men and heroes, and fair peaceful fields, but her fens shall be enlarged, and dragons shall dwell there, and slimy unnameable monsters, and all manner of foul creeping things, and few and base shall her people be."

Then by his magic art Lu spread a vision before the hero, and Cuculain saw his native land, sea-girt, like a picture, with all her tuaths and mōr-tuaths, and, like silver threads, he saw her everlasting streams; south-

[1] I know nothing of this hero. [2] T. B C., p. 151.

westward the mighty Shannon running from its source at Connla's Well, where glistened the sacred hazel,[1] and the fairy queens who guarded it, and he saw the Three[2] Waters starting from Slieve Blahma glittering through mid-Erin as they ran; the noble Slaney, too, he saw, and the Liffey returning to its source; the lordly Boyne crowned with woods, and the palaces of the immortal gods; the Bann with its sacred estuary; the Drowis, and the Lee silver-flowing, untroubled, like a dream, and the sacred mountains of Eiré, and her plains and many woods, her sea-piercing promontories and storm-repelling bays. And Cuculain saw her warlike tribes dwelling afar, and heroic forms in all the territories, and over Eiré all the peoples raising to him high memorials, and hymning his name in songs. Also, the god caused him to see strange lands with mightier streams and fiercer suns, and the race of the ancient Gædil there dwelling, and his name there renowned.

Then the vision faded, and Cuculain saw before him a sword,[3] the haft towards him. Like glittering diamond it shone, and the handle was inlaid with wondrous pearls, and on its starry sides were there graved verses in such an Ogham as Cathvah never taught to Ultonian youths. True was that sword and pure, and the hero seized it and went on against the Clan Cailitin. On the edge of the moving darkness strode Glas Mac Dalga, and Cuculain cried with a voice warning—"Son

[1] See Chap. XXVI., Vol. I.; also M. & C., Vol. II., p. 143.

[2] Suir, Nore, and Barrow.

[3] This was the Fraygarta, the sword of Mananān, with which Lu had destroyed the Fomorians.

of Dalga, thou art not of their race, come forth from amongst them." And three times Cuculain called to him, and three times he refused. Then went on that mighty hero against the weird brood, fearless, alone, and a silence, and a terror fell on all the hosts of Erin. Alone went the hero, him nor god nor tutelar spirit, nor any of his class of power accompanied, repelled afar by the might of the Clan Cailitin. From their hills and grassy thrones remote, the gods of Erin watched him: Bove Derg from his cloudy turrets above the waters of the Aherlow; the great Dagda from his fairy palace by the Boyne, over against Ros-na-ree. Alone went the hero, while around him nations trembled; but into his heart the Ioldāna breathed his own lavish soul, and that fierce wrath, begotten of solitary thought, and outrage, and sacred pity, with which in the ancient days he led the arisen gods against the Fomoroh, laying waste at Moy Tura their accursed ranks. Far flashed around him a starry radiance; he went swiftly, moaning as he went, and his voice was like the low brool of distant thunder heard behind hills, when the storm-spirit murmurs in his wrath; from the depths of his soul, shaken with a mighty rage, arose the black-bird[1] of his valour, and floated in a visible shape above his head; gigantic waxed thy stature, Riastarra![2] Alone he went down against the Clan Cailitin, as one who goes down into hell, the darkness gathered him in.

Within as from far distance there arose reverberations

[1] There is a mystic meaning in this, see Mr. Hennessy's Article on the war-goddess.

[2] He is called by this name in the story called "Sick Bed of Cuculain," and refers to an idea that in battle his stature increased.

and horrid echoes as from deep caverns, and voice calling to voice, as of troop encouraging troop, and a noise of a crash, as of giants falling, a clangour of brass, and the thunder-pealing cry of the son of Sualtam amid the deafening uproar. Through rolling clouds there gleamed lurid lightnings, revealing things nameless, not to be described. From their tombs brake forth the ancient dead at the noise of that strife like the shock of worlds, for the earth stirred herself, and the dead arose out of their sleep of ages. Then time gave up her secrets and births to be, and her veiled nations and generations arose rank behind rank. Like a torrent's fall their voices sounded from afar, summoning him to their deliverance, their thin voices unheard in the crash and roar of that awful strife.

Then were the hosts of Erin disordered, and the battalions clashed together; then sprang champions forth out of their chariots, and the steeds were panic-stricken, and flew through the plain with the war-cars. Now, too, was heard the voice of Cuculain, and he cried:—

"I know thee, O Mōr Reega. Four-footed[1] thou dost not deceive me. What doest thou here in the shades of hell, thou queen of the mountain-dwelling gods? When wilt thou cease to persecute me, for I fear thee not?"

Thereafter arose the sound of a boy's voice, shrieking, being pursued, and then silence. Slowly then, like a mist, that magic darkness melted into the air, till that last inky blot had vanished, and on the reddened sward lay the enchanter, and his twenty-seven sons together, and further west, by himself, towards the camp of Meave,

[1] A perusal of Mr. Hennessy's Article on the war-goddess will explain this allusion.

lay Glas Mac Dalga, and the hero stood alone, swordless, but with Fabâne still on his left arm. Amongst the dead was found the body of Fiecha Mac Fir Phœbé, the exiled Ultonian.

Then ran forward the hosts of the Clanna Rury, and the men of Meave brake and fled, some to Tara, and others following the course of the Three Waters, and there fled southwards the Ernai and the Clan Dēga, the Dergtheena and the Dairfeena, the Fir-morca and the people of Lōk Mac Favash, the Corca Lewy and the southern Fir-bolgs; but Queen Meave and the Olnemacta fled to the Shannon, pursued by the Clanna Rury and Cuculain. Nay-the-less, Cuculain himself checked the pursuit, and in the rear of their host he raised up his shield and guarded[1] the retreat of Queen Meave, until they crossed the Shannon at Ath-a-Luan[2] Mic-Lewy. Then, on the eastern bank of the river, Cuculain set up a trophy and memorial, three great pillar stones,[3] hard by the stream. Queen Meave, on her part, sent back the Donn Cooalney[4] to the Ultonians, and Cuculain led back the Red Branch into the north, with the captives and the plunder.

[1] See T. B. C., p. 370. The chivalrous actions recorded of Cuculain are innumerable.

[2] Athlone.

[3] Smote them, saith the legend, from the mountain side with his sword.

[4] Thus probably we may interpret the wild story of the Donn Cooalney conquering the Fionbannah, taking him up on his horns, scattering his fragments over all the centre of Erin, the loin being shaken off at Ath-luain (Athlone), and returning in full speed to his native land of Murthemney.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN THE CITY OF ATH-A-CLIAH.

"Wrapped in thy scarlet bratta I see thee stalk through the city's
Narrow and populous streets."

LONGFELLOW.

FOR six years Cuculain rode triumphant over the nations of Eiré, and extended far and wide the authority of the Red Branch, and installed Lewy Rievenerg as King in Temair; but at last the year[1] drew on in which Cuculain should die.

In that year there was peace throughout all Eiré, and a suspension of war upon all sides, and the authority of Concobar Mac Nessa was very great. For Meave had made terms with him, and the kings of Munster and Leinster were submissive, and the four columns of Tara held Meath subject to the young king of Temair. Then Concobar Mac Nessa resolved to send forth an expedition against the isles of Alba and the marine districts, where he had colonies and subjects, but where his authority was lessened by reason of the great wars in Erin. Now before that, there came tributes to him even from the isles of Orc, where Cuculain Mac Sualtam had broken the power of the native races, and established the authority of the king of Ulla.

Then there was a great hosting of the Red Branch, and of volunteers from the rest of Eiré, and this expedi-

[1] A.D. 9.

tion went forth out of Ath-a-cliah,[1] which the foreign merchants called Eblana, and it was subject to Lewy Rievenerg. But Concobar and his council determined that Cuculain should not go upon that expedition, for they said, "As long as Cuculain is in Erin so long will all those who would gladly rebel remain peaceful, but Ulla, being denuded of her warriors, will thus be safe on account of the great fear in which men hold Cuculain." Now Cuculain was not pleased at that resolution, nevertheless he submitted, but he came down to Ath-a-cliah and witnessed the departure of the Red Branch, and crossed the Tolka, and entered the walled city of Ath-a-cliah, and he and the great knights of the Clanna Rury were entertained publicly that night; but in the morning, ere it was day, the embarkation began, and perpetually until noon oared galleys were going down the Liffey to the sea, laden with warriors and stores, and the warriors shouted as each galley went off, and the unwarlike citizens clamoured along the shore; but lower down where the river broadens, between Ben Edar[2] and the opposite shore, they formed into lines before they went out into the open sea. All the great captains and princes of the Red Branch approached Cuculain, saluting him affectionately and sadly ere they departed, for a dark rumour went abroad that day through the host; but Cuculain and Læg, Lewy Rievenerg and his queen, Devorgilla, were upon a raised place beside the wharf on the north side of the river. Along with them was Conaill, surnamed the Victorious, and Lendabar his wife, who

[1] The ford of hurdles. The ford, in this case, was a bridge, see MS. Materials, p. 269.

[2] Howth.

had accompanied her great lord southwards to the sea; also his son, Euryal Glun-mar, for the other son[1] went off early in the morning, leading volunteers from the districts east of Slieve Blàma. But Conaill Carna was disturbed in his mind, and his noble countenance was marred, nor exulted he in the martial display, nor in the brilliant warriors before him, and he, with a sad countenance, said to Cuculain :—

"O Cu, there are evil rumours abroad concerning thee this day; and I think that there is not wisdom in the Saba of the High King, though one of them is my own father, that they should send forth all the flower and strength of the Red Branch for the conquest of that barren coast and those naked isles, leaving thee only to be a mainstay of the realm. And this, too, thou well knowest, O Lewy, for between friends it may be mentioned, that without the Red Branch thy sovereignty is lost. For thou wast elected partly out of reverence for an omen, but principally on account of thy foster-father, Cuculain, and the great power and authority which he, and he only, though I displease him by saying it, has procured for the Clanna Rury. For beyond the Four Pillars of Tara, who unsupported are powerless, thou hast no force to quell anywhere an insurrection, and thy enemies are like the sands of yonder shore. For all Leinster is in the hands of tribes hostile to thee, obedient to the sons of Finn, the son of Ross Roe, and the son of Cairbry Nia-far, Erc, the fair-haired, a subtle-minded and ambitious youth, himself a son of the king of Tara; and in the south are the children of

[1] Leix Land-Mōr.

Cathîr, son of Eterskél, king of the Ernai, and the descendants of that mighty monarch slain hard by where we now sit, and all the west is subject to that great Queen, whom fear alone causes to obey thee. And thou art king of Erin, and entitled to hold the great assembly at Temair only because of Cuculain and the Red Branch, though, too, thy birth is right royal.

"But thinking upon these things, O Cu, my mind misgives me this day, when I think of Ulla emptied of the Clanna Rury, and of thee, with old men and boys, and a feeble battalion of trained warriors against a sudden hosting of our enemies. For I think, O my dear foster-brother, that though thy countenance is mild, and though thou art dear to the women of Ulla, and though the Red Branch honour thee like a god, that elsewhere throughout Eiré there is not a household in which thy name is not like a curse, for there are not many tribes in Fohla out of which thou hast not at some time slain a son, or a father, or a brother, and there is a tide of vengeance which is growing against thee, and which thou hast incurred fighting for our king, being always the first to enter a battle, and the last to leave it, for the Clan Humōr in the west abhor thee since that great battle in which thou didst conquer them at Rath Cruhane; and now the power of that Province has passed altogether[1] into their hands, and Queen Meave leans upon them, and Erc, the son of Cairbry Nia-far, nurses

[1] The authority of the sons of Aileel was, however, subsequently restored. After the death of Aileel there was a war between Senbus, supported by the Clan Humōr, and Mainey Ahrimail. The latter was victorious, and died grandævus in the reign of Tuhal Tectmar, king of Erin. See O'Flaherty's "Ogygia."

against thee a vengeful heart, since that great battle at Rosnaree, where thou slewest his father, and brake the power of the nobles of Meath and Bregia; and at Finn Cora thou slewest Finn his brother, the son of Rossa Roe, king of Lahan;[1] and his sons are now powerful; and at Gabra, hard by towards the west, thou didst slay Liath Maina and the kings of Munster; and at Letter Lee thou didst conquer and slay Curoi Mac Dary, and his sons yet live and are powerful; and at Moy Femen thou didst overthrow the Clan Dēga, and Temair Luhara[2] thou didst sack, and Garmān; and there is no part of Eiré in which thou hast not sown some bitter seed. Also, there is that prophecy about the Clan Cailitin[3] who, they say, have even gone down to hell searching for means by which to destroy thee; and now, O my dear foster-brother, thus shalt thou do. If the men of Erin invade Ulla, thou shalt retreat before them, passing into remote fastnesses, or to Emain Macha, which is fortified; but go not out into the open against them, and when I return with the Red Branch we will take vengeance and exact a four-fold eric. And this I say, being much thy elder, and loving thee above all others, for since that feast[4] at

[1] Leinster.

[2] This was in Kerry. Its destruction by Cuculain and the Ultonians forms the subject of a celebrated historic tale, "Mesca Uladh."

[3] Note. By the advice of Cailitin, Queen Meave returning, brake the right hands and the right feet of the six surviving children of Cailitin, that they might devote their lives to druidism and enchantments.

[4] This was the palace of Bricrind, the satirist; and it was at this feast, owing to the wiles of Bricrind, that then commenced the celebrated dispute between Cuculain, Conaill Carna, and Lægairé Buada, concerning the right to the Champion's Throne of Ulla. After the expulsion of Fergus Mac Roy, the military chief of the Red Branch, some such dissensions must have arisen. This dispute forms the subject of a historic tale, called "The Feast of Bricrind."

Dûn Rury no jealous spirit ever touched me, though before that thou wast knighted I was chiefest in renown, and Legairé Buada next to me.

And Lewy Rievenerg said:—

"To thee, O dear foster-father, it is due that I hold in Tara the silvern wand of Yeoha Feidleea;[1] and though slender my power, yet no foe shall approach Murthemney unless my warriors be overthrown, and myself slain."

But Cuculain smiled upon Lewy Rievenerg, and answered Conaill thus:—

"O foster-brother, thou art sad because thou art departing and I am left behind, and I, too, am sad for the same cause. I also shall one day die like those who were better than me, who perished in Moy Tura the Upper and the Lower, where perished of yore the heroic Firbolgs, and the Fomoroh; and the sons of Milith perished who were greater and nobler than we, and who fought against the gods, and drave them to the hills and the protection of the Fæd Fia; and I think at times of my own ancestor, the heroic Iar,[2] who died in the night and in the storm, overwhelmed by the waves, when his ship brake in the darkness against the black rock most treacherous, and they say his tomb is on the summit, where four great stones support a huge flag; but I, when I die, shall be slain in battle, breathing forth warlike breath, defending the Red Branch, and my people who elected me to be their king, and of whom many have already perished fighting beside me. But death shall not surprise me, for I shall see certain portents. I shall

[1] His grand-father. [2] See Vol. I., p. 73.

hear the music of Orphid, the son of Manar, and see Rod the son of Lir.[1] These things the gods of Erin have promised me, and they made me strong who was weak, and great who was little, and when they indicate to me that I must die, then shall I die. Thou, O Conaill, and others may avoid death, but I am in the hand of the gods, and aught that they indicate I must do."

But Cuculain turned to Furbey,[2] the Cæsarian, who was near him and said :—

"I think, O Furbey, that thy slinging will soon render mine obscure, though I, too, could shoot very straight, but I practised industriously that I might excel."

Then Furbey blushed and laughed, for he was a boy, and many an hour had he spent at this exercise in solitary places, and deemed that it was not known.

But after that there came a lewd fellow out of the street saying :—

"Which among you is Cuculain, the great warrior, concerning whom the poets everlastingly sing, saying, 'That he is, by far, the best man in all Erin.'"

And Cuculain looked upon the man, smiling pleasantly, and said :—

"O, gracious citizen, I am he."

But the other answered, with an oath such as men used then, "That Cuculain was not fit to buckle his armour on Angus, the son of Humōr, for he had seen the

[1] See "Great Breach of Murthemney."

[2] His surname was derived from the manner of his birth. His mother Einey was drowned accidently in that river of Westmeath, which from her was named the Inny. It was he who slew Queen Meave at Inis Clohra in Lough Ree, striking her with a bullet from his sling from the western shore of the lake.

Clan Humôr while they lived under the protection of Cairbry Nia-far;" and he also said, "That the youth with red hair, and the gold band round his forehead,[1] was the greatest warrior in that presence."

Whereat amongst the princes there arose much laughter, therefore Conaill was unable to repeat his suit to Cuculain, and he parted with a very sad heart. Then the last of the flooring that ran from the wharf to that galley in which Conaill, son of Amargin, sailed, was taken away, and the white oars began to move where, unseen, the oarsmen plied their manly labour.

The ship went down the stream, but Conaill stood upon the deck, turning round from time to time, as the ship went on. Yet in his heart there was a feeling as if an ice-cold hand were touching the springs of life, and with difficulty he repressed the rising tear, and already he plotted in his deep heart that terrible vengeance[2] which he exacted afterwards on the slayers of Cuculain.

But Cuculain and Læg wandered through the city of Ath-a-Cliah,[3] wondering at the many strange things there, for there was much traffic, and many persons passing to and fro, and a roar of wheels and of hurrying feet. Moreover, along the streets, behind windows of bright glass, were exposed many curious goods of the merchants, and tempting wares of all kinds, both those which were native to the land, and what was brought

[1] This was Læg.

[2] This forms the subject of a celebrated tale, entitled, "The Red Route of Conaill Carna," in vengeance of Cuculain.

[3] The trade of Dublin with the Continent must have been considerable at this time. In the second century the division of the dues of this port caused a great war. See "Battle of Moy Leana." See Tacitus on the commercial greatness of Ireland in his own time. Dublin was at this time a city of timber.

beyond the seas by the merchant; and Cuculain and Læg wandered on from window to gay window, for in some were choice swords, and spear-heads, and body-armour, and in others were chariots, some strong and low-wheeled and scythéd for war, but others also for pleasure, and vehicles for the transfer of goods, and for the service of those that tilled the soil. And they passed by windows in which were exposed mantles and lēnas of wool, linen, and silk, decorated with gold thread or silver, and with the labours of the embroidering woman, and others in which were rolls and leaves of parchment in which men's thoughts were inscribed; and Cuculain wondered at this, for timber and stone only were used amongst his people for that purpose, and the form of the letters too was different; and they came to another house, in which there were small images of horses cut in timber, and of warriors' chariots and horses set upon a flooring of deal, and beneath the flooring, wheels, so that the whole might move forward together, and warriors sat in the chariot, of whom one drove while the other, as it were, fought, and the head of the fighting man nodded as the wheels went round. This Læg purchased, remembering a small fair head at Dûn Dalgan, taking from his belt a small silver weight, for uncoined gold and silver were then used instead of money, and of this the rechtairé[1] of Cuculain received much in return for the wool which his estates produced abundantly.

So through the city of Ath-a-Cliah walked the heroes; and Cuculain was dejected when he looked upon the people, so small were they, and so pale and ignoble, both in appearance and behaviour; and also when he

[1] The maor of the estates.

saw the extreme poverty of the poor, and the hurrying eager crowds seeking what he knew not. But they, on the other hand, were astonished at the heroes, the greatness of their stature, the majesty of their bearing, and their tranquillity; also, at the richness and brightness of their apparel, the whiteness of their skin, and their long hair, parted in the middle and rolling over their shoulders. For, amongst the citizens of Ath-a-Cliah, they seemed like scions of some mighty and divine race long since passed away.

But after this they visited that place in which justice was dispensed amongst the citizens of Ath-a-Cliah; and it so happened that when Cuculain entered there was a great trial proceeding, concerning the assassination of a princess,[1] who was slain beside the river, by the servant of Enna, whose father's palace was upon the hill called Forcarthen, and the court was crowded. Nevertheless they gave way before the princes, and a murmur passed through the assembly as they entered, for their fair countenances seemed to lighten that dim place, and far above the crowd appeared their mighty shoulders and lofty heads, and the business of the court was suspended. So, for a space, stood Cuculain and Læg, and they listened to the administration of the laws of the city. On a raised seat sat the presiding ollav. Fat was he, and uncomely to look upon, but a bright and nimble spirit illuminated his unheroic visage; and Cuculain and Læg laughed at his swift mirth-moving comments and interrogations as the case proceeded; also, Cuculain wondered at his marvellous sagacity, and reasonableness,

[1] Her name was Dove, Gælicé Dûbh, hence Dubh Linn = the pool of Dubh, or Dublin. See M. and C., Vol. II., p. 288.

and minute acquaintance with the ancient laws of Ollam Fodla,[1] for he himself being a king, was president of the Cûlairechta[2] of his nation, although in Ath-a-Cliah, being a city of merchants, many alterations and innovations had been made; then between two ollavs, one defending and the other prosecuting the charge against the man-slayer, there arose an unseemly dispute and much bickering and clamour, amid which the warriors retired and went forth, but there followed them many of the people.

But after that they set forth with the retinue,[3] and a great multitude had assembled at the place from which they should start, and where the retinue were already in readiness, and when Cuculain entered the chariot, they shouted; and though many of them were very meagre to look upon and thinly clad, yet they cried out lustily in honour of the renowned Prince, for his fame had gone abroad over the whole land, and warmed many cold, and lit many dark souls. But amongst them, also, were dark and angry faces of warriors who had fought at Rosnaree, under Cairbry Nia-far, and at Gabra, under Finn Mac Rossa, and of dispossessed lords of territory, whom Cuculain and the Red Branch had driven out, and who, now in poverty and disgrace, nursed a sad life in Ath-a-Cliah.

But Cuculain and Læg set forth to travel northward, and they passed the Tolka, and drave by the sea-side,

[1] This was a great pre-historic King of Ulster and of all Erin, see Chap. I.

[2] This was the Court of Appeal, see M. and C., Vol. I., p. 262.

[3] According to the Brehon laws no king could travel outside his own territory without a retinue of eighty men. M. and C., Vol. III., p. 503.

with a retinue of eighty men, according to the law, and they came to Lusk, and were entertained that night by Forgal Manah, who conversed loftily with Cuculain, advising him in many things, for he was a judge and a man in authority, nor remembered he now that slaughter which Cuculain had made amongst his people when he fled with Emer, and at every ford and narrow pass between Lusk and Dûn-Dalgan was forced to fight with the people of Forgal, bearing away his wife, beautiful Emer, who was surnamed the eloquent and the proud.

But in the morning Cuculain and his people set off again, and it was evening when they reached Dûn Dalgan, and the hounds recognised him afar off, baying lustily, and in all the windows of the Dûn there was a ruddy light, illumining the lime-trees and elms upon the lawn, and the bright stream[1] that traversed it, starting from the well-head beneath the Dûn, and in which Cuculain, as a child, had been wont to play, building there dams and mimic bridges, and in which Connla now did the same, after the manner of children delighting in such things.

Then the draw-bridge was let down, creaking on brazen hinges; and in the gate-way of the rampart stood Emer, having on her breast Fionscōta, and Connla stood beside her, holding her right hand. Happy that night was Emer, knowing that her lord was not needed for that foreign service of the Red Branch, remembering not at all prophecies, and omens, and the dim predictions

[1] This stream is said to flow still from the neighbourhood of what is believed to be the remains of Cuculain's palace.

of the soothsayers of Ulla; therefore, she stood radiant in the gate-way, having the appearance of a beautiful and happy maiden, though six years had passed since she was the bride of Cuculain; and when he saw her, Cuculain sprang forth from the chariot; but Læg took the boy into the chariot, setting him on his knee, and entrusted the reins to his tiny hands, and so they drave round to where were the stables and chariot-houses in the rear of the dûn; and soon the wide court was filled with an immense noise, the washing of steeds and chariots, and the cries of horseboys, and the loud voice of Læg controlling them and directing.

But within the dûn, in the great central chamber, supper was prepared; and when those who travelled had removed from themselves the stains of travel, they all came into the lofty and bright chamber, set around with tall waxen candles that glittered upon polished shields and spear-heads all around. A long table extended from the north southwards, and at one end sat Cuculain, and Læg, and Emer, and the Ard-Druid and Ard-Ollav of that small realm, and the hostages and young princes in fosterage. There then they feasted joyfully, while the music of the harp and reed was heard, and Cuculain talked and laughed much that night, for he was by no means of a morose disposition, nor accustomed to wear a severe countenance at a feast; and Connla, at the lower table with the ruder warriors and swine-herds, whose society he most affected, displayed the toy-chariot, rolling it upon the table; but when it was exhibited at the lower table there was a loud laughter, when the rough warriors saw how the head nodded in the chariot as the wheels went round; and thus they amused them-

selves till there arose the shanachie of the realm, and he sang of the history of Lewy Rievenerg, the high king of all Erin, and how Yeoha Faydleea ruled over Erin, and begat the three Finns of Emain, and how they and their sister Clohra brought up Lewy, and how the brothers rebelled; and of that great battle at Ath Comhar, and the ghastly present made to the high king, and of Lewy solitary grieving he sang, and of his residence at Dûn Dalgan, and the parental care of Cuculain; also of that Convention at Temair, and of the soothsayer starting forth from slumber and crying:—

"I have seen a youth weeping beside a couch at Emain Macha, and on the couch lay a hero, dying of a wasting and nameless sickness, being stricken by the divine people. That youth weeping shall be your king."

Then they all drank a pledge in honour of the High King, and Devorgilla his queen, for Lewy had been often in that hall, a young unknown prince, ere that election, and he was faithful and affectionate beyond all others to Cuculain.

But after that Cuculain and Emer, Læg, and certain others withdrew to the grianan of Emer, and conversed in a more private fashion, and Cuculain described all that he had heard and seen in Ath-a-Cliah; and of the warriors some played at chess, but others, and these the best, conversed with the queen. For pure and good was the wife of Cuculain; her mind eager concerning the noble and the true, and those who conversed with her were happy for many days.

Thus were they employed in that bright chamber; but out on the waves of the Muirnict there was a sound of singing voices, and the music of the harp and reed,

mingled with the wash of waters, and the noise of a thousand oars in the row-locks, and in every ship the bards' song was concerning Cuculain, and dark prophecies were chanted, and many rough warriors wept that night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A WARNING AT MIDNIGHT.

"And 'mid the tumult Kubhla heard from far,
Ancestral voices prophesying war."

COLERIDGE.

It was the eve of Samhâne at Emain Macha, and in the great feasting-chamber of the Royal Dûn Concobar Mac Nessa entertained his people according to the ancient custom. But this time none of the great warriors of the Clanna Rury were present, save the household troops[1] of the King, even the permanent battalion of Emain Macha, and for the rest, only white-haired ancient warriors, majestic, renowned for heroic deeds, eating now in peace the fruits of long honourable lives, practising each man what pleased him in his youth, for one loved agriculture, the wise keeping of cattle and the breeding of excellent steeds, and another devoted himself to fruit-trees[2] and herbs, and another to poetry and druidism, and another to history and the laws the rami-

[1] The "Amhus."

[2] Though allusions to the beauty of flowers are numerous in the heroic literature, I think there is no passage referring to them as being artificially cultivated.

fications of noble clans, and their remote origins and distant intercommunications. Of these ancients the king composed the Sāba of the Ultonian nation, and amongst them he now himself was to be ranked, for his wise physicians did not permit him to go out to war since that foray in which Cet, the great champion of the clans of Moyrisk, had made against him that fatal cast at Derry Da Væh. There also were hostages, some having a gold fetter, and some silver, and some iron,[1] in pledge with the Ard-Rie of Ulla for the fidelity of their people.

Nevertheless, far different now was this hall from those days in which it rang with the shouts of the Red Branch around Cuculain, returning with the Ultonians from some great southern war. Without the wintry wind howled, and within, nor ale, nor lights, nor smitten harps and lofty tale dispelled a dim sense of some impending woe; for there were prophecies abroad, and whispered rumours, and the soothsayers of Ulla went sadly and conversed in secret.

Then the High King smote the resounding canopy with his silver wand, and, in the ensuing silence, said:—

"This night it is customary to exhibit those symbols of the greatness of the three mighty champions who sustain this Ultonian realm, that all may know to whom is due the first honour, and to whom the second and the third, amongst the warriors of this nation. Go, O Fion-cu,[2] to the Tayta Brac, and bring hither the three

[1] According to the degree of hostility exhibited by their people. I cannot recall the authority.

[2] It was he who used to summon the Red Branch to war.

goblets,[1] by which Aileel and Meave signified the respective greatness of my dear nephew, Cuculain Mac Sualtam, and Conaill, the son of Amargin, and Lægairé Buada, son of Conud, son of Iliach."

Then arose that swift messenger of the king, and having lit a torch, he passed forth into the night, for the Tayta Brac[2] was removed from the palace by a courtyard. Wild indeed was that night, so that the houses seemed to rock. Within, the High King grew impatient, so long was Fion-cu absent. At length he returned, and the assembly looked upon him with astonishment, for wild and haggard was his countenance, and his hair dishevelled over his face. His knees smote one another as he crossed the hall, and when he set the goblets on the table, that which was of gold with the flashing diamond fell.

But when the High King would have spoken, there appeared in the chamber a woman,[3] framed and attired as if for swift travel, her countenance pale and distraught, and she advanced towards the High King's place. But he said:—

"What tidings dost thou bring me, O Levarcam? Truly thy countenance is troubled, and like to one who comes with a message of woe."

[1] The goblet of Lægairé was of a bronze, with a lip of findruiney carved into the likeness of a bird, that of Conaill of silver, with a lip of gold, also bird-like, that of Cuculain of pure ruddy gold, with a lip bird-like, of flashing diamond. See Crowe MSS.

[2] The speckled or various-coloured house, Poikilé Stoa. Here were kept the arms of the Red Branch when they were at Emain Macha.

[3] The ban-ecla, or female-courier of Concobar. She is mentioned as educating Deirdré. See Vol. I., Chap. xxv. See "History of the Children of Usna" (Uisnech). Publications of Gælic Society. I attempt no explanation of this strange character.

But she, weeping, said :—

"There is a great hosting of all the Four Provinces to Rath Cruhane. Erc the son of Cairbré Nia-far, and Lewy Mac Conroi, and Concobar and Mac Nia, the two sons of Finn Mac Rossa, gather all their warriors together. There is mutiny and rebellion over the south of Eiré and the midland, and the warlike colonies of the Red Branch are destroyed. All the soothsayers and interpreters of omens declare that the end of Cuculain is at hand, and that the remnant of the brood of Cailitin have returned to Erin, and that they are abroad this night, having great power."

So spake Lavarcam, weeping, nor did the ancients of the Clanna Rury further feast that night, but, in blank dismay, devised vain schemes for the protection of the province, and the preservation of the son of Sualtam.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST HOSTING AGAINST CUCULAIN.

"The hoarse note of rebellion, tumultuous and swelling."[1]

ANCIENT BARD.

It was in the dusk of the evening as she returned alone from the pasture-ground and the quarter of her herdsmen hard by the palace, and as she passed through the lawn of her dún, beneath the trees, that the Clan Cailitin appeared unto Queen Meave, and the great Queen screamed when she saw them. Nevertheless,

[1] The Battle of Moy Leana.

the old vindictive spirit returned into her mind when she knew that they had come back into Erin, all-powerful, having acquired magic attributes, before which even those who dwelt invisible in the mountains were impotent, and she said that now at last would the Red Branch be rooted out, and Cuculain, son of Sualtam, overborne and slain. Wherefore, she sent a far summons to her allies and friends, and all who held rebellious thoughts against the Ultonians, and against the king[1] whom they had set up in Tara.

It was fourteen days ere all these came together to Rath Cruhâne, and selecting the chiefs, she harangued them in a secret assembly, having first dismissed Fergus upon distant service to the extreme west of the province. There she enumerated all that the nations of Eiré had suffered at the hands of the Red Branch, and how now an opportunity of gold was within their reach, seeing that Cuculain only remained in Erin out of all the might of the Clanna Rury, and that no power could restrain him from entering the battle against them, even alone, should they invade his realm or any part of Ulla, and that now the withered and blasted brood had returned to Erin, and how all the soothsayers had prophesied that their return would be fatal to Cuculain, and she said :—

" O Lewy Mac Conroi, hast thou the heart to go upon this hosting?"

Then Lewy Mac Conroi answered fiercely, relating the slaughter of his father at the hands of Cuculain, and

[1] Lewy Rievenerg, son of the three Finns of Emain, sons of Yeoha the melancholy, father of Queen Meave.

at his hands the destruction of his palace and the subjugation of his nation, and there before the assembled kings he renounced his allegiance to the Clanna Rury, and all love and gratitude to the son of Sualtam.[1]

Then was Queen Meave glad, and she turned to Erc and said :—

"At least thou, O Erc, wilt cleave to the Clanna Rury, so dextrously have they used thee for their own good."

And Erc answered :—

"The Clanna Rury have ever been most gracious to me, and most so Cuculain, son of Sualtam, who with Emer, his beautiful wife, have oftentimes hospitably entertained me in their palace at Dûn Dalgan."

But Queen Meave smiled, and said :—

"Surely, wise and prudent is the Sâba of the King of Ulla, and very crafty and politic is the Prince of Murthemney. Kind words, and a welcome, and banquets they give thee, and thou for them holdest Mid-Erin in subjection. Thou art still young, O son of the King of Erin, and therefore very confiding and simple."

Then Erc blushed with shame, and said :—

"My sister, Acaill, who was as a mother unto me when I was a child, and tenderly reared me until she went northwards into Ulla as the bride of Glan, son of Carbad, strictly enjoined me that I should be faithful to the Red Branch."

[1] Cuculain was the foster-father and upholder of Lewy. Early in his career he had sacked Cathair Conroi, the palace of Curoi Mac Dary, in the mountains west of Tralee, and there slain the father of Lewy, and broken down the Clan Conroi.

But Queen Meave, laughing scornfully, said :—

"Who is Acaill that she should govern the thoughts of men? It is not right that a woman should take upon herself authority and rule. Thou didst well to obey her when thou wast a child; but a king governs himself, and is guided by his own counsel. Knowest thou who slew thy father, O thou gentle and forgiving?"

And Erc answered :—

"O mighty Queen, I will go out upon this hosting. Again in my mind hast thou awaked visions of vengeance, and wrath at last appeased, and disgrace outworn, and humiliation set aside. For the princes of Meath and Bregia say to me, taunting, 'O Erc, son of Cairbré, how long shall remain unavenged the bloody grave of thy heroic sire, whilst thou, in sleek, ignoble ease, livest vilely, confederate with those who slew him, and who expelled all the nobles loyal to thy line, and set up against thee in Tara this lily-hearted youth. But thou art traitor to thy race, for thy father was Cairbré Nia-far, King of all Erin,[1] and his father Rossa Roe, a stock of Royal Branches, and his father Fergus of the Rings, King of Erin, and his father Nuada the Snow-white, who drave the Clan Dēga out of Tara and ruled in their stead, being a descendant of that Crimthann who, with Rury Mōr, contended for the Ard-Rieship of all Erin, his race even then kingly, when the Red Branch was yet ignoble and unknown. But thou art a rank weed, misusing the soil that nourished thy royal-hearted sires.' So they speak to me in secret, casting taunts.

[1] Cairbré Nia-far was really only king of Tara. In the more trustworthy lists he is never put down as King of Ireland.

And when I go down to Ath-a-Cliah I see there stern countenances full of wrath and scorn, and limbs of heroic mould in mean raiment, and maimed warriors who perilled all for my father, and they gather together in groups, and look side-long at me as I pass, holding silence. Yea, and in my hall when the poets sing I feel the veiled satire, the half-discovered appeal, and the half-revealed contempt, and my life is a burthen to me, and without joy this permitted sovereignty. Well I know who slew him, for it was Cuculain, the son of Sualtam, on that fatal day at Ros-na-Ree, when the Boyne flowed red with the blood of my nation. I too fling aside my allegiance, and if in battle I meet the son of Sualtam, I shall slay him, or he will slay me."

Also, Concobar and Mac Nia disclaimed their allegiance, whose father the son of Sualtam had slain, and whose nation he had reduced, so that they acknowledged the sovereignty of the Clanna Rury.

Then was there a swift hosting of the allies of Meath, and, for the last time, Murthemney was invaded by the great Queen of the Olnemacta.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FLIGHT TO EMAIN MACHA.

"Boom, storm-bell."

EDMUND ARMSTRONG.

ON the morrow, after the feast of Samhane, Cuculain and Læg arose early, for they intended that day to hunt in the forests eastward in Cooalney. Around the dûn there was a noise of preparation, for the hounds bayed in their osiered cars, and the slaves were bringing forth the nets and boar-spears. Below, the Muirnict glittered, sharp smitten by the bright frosty ray. On a stone seat, hard by the door-way on the left, sat Cuculain; on his right was Luath, the favourite hound, and between his knees Connla, listening with wondering eyes, while Cuculain related to him, in simple child-like fashion, how in the ancient days Fuad and Murthemney[1] had conquered that country, and he described their battles and sufferings, and how they cleared the ancient forests, and built dûns, and made pasture-land for their cattle.[2]

Then Cuculain, raising his eyes, saw Lavarcam emerging from a beech grove, and moving slowly across the lawn. To her Cuculain hastened gladly, indicating to

[1] See Keatinge's description of the Milesian invasion.

[2] Of the ancient kings and heroes such achievements are regularly entered, see Keatinge and Four Masters.

Læg that he should put back the preparations, and he received the ban-ecla, pouring forth a torrent of friendly welcome and affection, and he led her into the palace into the greenan of Emer, but the beautiful ban-ecla sighed as she went, and the bright tears shone in her eyes.

Thereafter entered Emer, and she likewise received the ban-ecla joyfully, and said :—

"O dear Lavarcam, it is long since you have been at Dûn Dalgan, and now shall you reman here for many days."

But while she yet spake, there entered a slave bearing a tray of polished findruiney, and she spread upon the table a cloth of fine linen, and laid thereon such viands as were customary in those days ; brown thin cakes of fine flour, prepared with cream and honey ; small rolls of fresh butter, and water-cresses from the stream, also glistening glass and mead in a silver jug with a lip of ruddy gold ; but Lavarcam, though she drank the ruddy mead, and affected to eat, nevertheless ate not, and she stammered in her speech, though before very eloquent. Then said Cuculain :—

"Thou art pale, O Lavarcam, and all thy limbs tremble. Thou comest, I think, bearing tidings of some great woe. Is it concerning my uncle, the High King of all Ulla, that thou hast now come ? Much do I fear concerning him since that fatal battle at Derry Da Væh."

Him the ban-ecla answered :—

"O Cuculain, I have a message unto thee from the High King and the Saba of the Ultonian nation, who strictly enjoin thee to come straightway to Emain Macha,

there thou mayest be under the protection of Cathvah, and the druids and wizards of the Clanna Rury. For the children of Cailitin have returned to Ireland, having great power, who have travelled the round world seeking means to destroy thee, and to dispel thy magic attributes and the favour of the Shee, and they say that they have even gone down to hell seeking means to destroy thee. Therefore, not without reason, O dear Setanta, is my face pale, and all my limbs tremble."

So spake the ban-ecla, and the flood of her sorrow overflowed, and she lifted up her voice and wept, lamenting for the hero.

But when she heard that word the daughter of Forgal Manah stood up from her place, concealing her face with her hands, and uttered a loud and piercing cry, for now the old weird prophecy was accomplished, and the end of all things was at hand, and the light of life went down into darkness and the grave, and the women of the dûn heard it and ran in, even her dear friends, and the daughters of the chieftains and nobles of all that territory who were in fosterage with Emer, and who daily grew more to resemble her in noble thoughts and gracious lofty mien, and when they heard of the return of the Clan Cailitin, they too lifted up their voices and fell each upon her knees, and they raised the cry of the dead, such as mourners raise over a king slain ; and the grinding[1] women and the slaves around the dûn heard

[1] The quern was still in use. It was not until the third century that the water-mill was introduced into Ireland in the reign of Cormac Mac Art. The little stream called Nemnech, which flows out of Tara, turned the first mill-wheel in Erin, and the name of the first miller was "Lam," anglicé "Hand."

it, and they raised up their voices weeping for the untimely end of the hero; but Cuculain supported Emer, and laid her white and motionless upon a couch, and gave her in charge to Lavarcam, and he met Læg at the door, and the men of the household, and he said:—

"These are bad tidings, O Læg; nevertheless I have not received those monitions which have been foretold to me, and till they arise I fear not that wandering clan. But go now and make preparations for our departure, for I must go on straightway to Emain Macha, obeying the command of the High King and his Saba, who desire that I shall henceforward, at Emain Macha, remain under the protection of the Cathvah and the druids and wizards of the Ultonians."

Then departed the warriors, pale and silent, smitten with a speechless sorrow, and the youths who were in fosterage came round Cuculain weeping, and to them Cuculain spake pleasant comfortable words, repeating what he had said to Læg, and their sorrow and terror were allayed."

All round the dûn moved the servants and men of war, hastening on the departure, and fierce and low were their words when any slackened or blundered in his task, eager that Cuculain should reach Emain Macha, and be under the protection of Cathvah and the druids of Ulla; nor did they or Cuculain know of the hosting, for this the ban-ecla concealed, knowing that thereafter it would not be in their power to bring away Cuculain out of Murthemney.

Then came the tanist[1] of the realm, and to him

[1] Besides the King there was always the King elect.

Cuculain gave the kingdom in charge, in words few and low, but of great authority, advising and dissuading; and ere noon they went forth from Dûn Dalgan, along the road which led to Emain Macha, with attending warriors and chariots. In one chariot travelled Emer with Fionscota, pale and silent, with large woe-stricken eyes, and in another Cuculain, and Læg, and Connla. At nightfall they were met by Genänn Gruag-Sulus, the son of Cathvah, with a company of the standing battalion of Emain Macha, and certain of the Ultonian druids, and they passed that night with the bru-fir of the territory, and on the next evening they approached Emain Macha, and Cuculain was glad when he saw the lights of the city, and the princely homes of the Red Branch; but Læg uttered bitter words, and recalled their return thither in old times how triumphant, having conquered the enemies of the Ultonians.

Then came forth from the city the standing battalion of Emain Macha, heavy-armed troops marching in strict order, and they enclosed the chariot of Cuculain, and kept back the shouting concourse, who joyfully beheld the coming of Cuculain, for the warriors feared lest Cuculain should learn the impending invasion, and a strict charge concerning this had gone out from the Saba, with speedy death as the penalty of its infringement.

So they approached the royal dûn, and Concobar Mac Nessa, and Mugain, the High Queen of the province, received Cuculain and Emer joyfully at the threshold of the dûn, and the young knights took charge of Cuculain, and Mugain and her women took charge of Emer and the two children.

That night they feasted as at other times in the Tec Mid-cuarta,[1] and Cuculain sat in his place in the Champion's Throne, and Emer in her place beyond all the queens and princesses of Ulla, for she ranked next to the High Queen herself amongst the women of the Ultonians. Bright shone the vessels of glass and bronze, silver and gold, and bright glittered the bronze capitals of the great pillars,[2] and the canopy above the High King's couch, and the joinings of the rafters of the lofty hall were apparent. But the feasting and merriment were alien to their thoughts, and an ice-cold hand touched the life-springs of every heart that night.

There was Cathvah the Ard-druid of the Ultonian nation, surnamed Iarn-glunah,[3] the mighty wizard, but his face was troubled, for all the omens pointed to sorrow, and his magic arts were confused, and some strange new power overshadowed him. There too was Genann "of the lightsome countenance," very dear he to Cuculain, and he sat next to the champion, and there too Nieve the druidess, the daughter of Kelkar, who, above all the women, loved and honoured the hero, and it was upon them that the Ultonians placed their chief reliance, for the power of Cathvah was broken by the enchantments of the children of Cailitin.

After the feast Cuculain and Læg went into the women's apartment, and Cuculain conversed that night after his wont, and he played at chess with Sencha Mac Aileel, the orator, and won from him three games, and Cuculain said:—

[1] *i.e.*, The chamber in the middle of the palace.

[2] For this description of the pillars, see M. and C., Vol. I., p. 348.

[3] Iron-kneed.

"O son of Aileel, I have beaten thee three times; yet never before have I won against thee even one game in three."

But the thoughts of the orator were elsewhere, and his mind confused.

In the great banqueting-hall the High King dismissed the warriors, and held a close council of the druids. One by one the candles went out through the vast chamber; but the druids gathering close together conversed long in low grave voices, for very real and terrible to them was that prophecy and the power of the Clan Cailitin.

At this council it was determined that Cuculain should, that night, be under the protection of Genänn, and should sleep in his chamber where were his idol gods, and his instruments of magic, and they thought that Genänn, before all others, would be able to shield him against the might of the wandering clan.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CUCULAIN HEARS THE SINGING OF MAC MANAR.

"WHIRL away, whirl away,
Eddying gust whirl the leaves
And the dust; lash the bay
Till it whitens;
Never spare it till it brightens,
Till it darkens, till it lightens
White and grey, white and grey.

"Bow the branches, conqueror!
Twirl the foam as it wreathes,
Twist the fern upon the scaur,
Toss the tarn until it seethes;
Sweep the world, overwhelm
Bending oak and tottering elm,
Scourge the forest and the sea,
Let the scudding rack be curl'd,
And the foamy flakes be whirl'd,
Sound a trumpet in the rocks—Victory!

"Eddying gust, whirl the leaf
With the dust to the bay—
Whirl away. . . . .
One I trembled to the sighing
Of a maiden who is dying
Far away.
And the merry sunshine thrilled me,
And the rapture of the May
Stirred within me, and it filled me
Full of life, and I was gay,
As I flickered on the spray,
Till a hoar-frost came and killed me,
Whirl away, whirl away!"

EDMUND ARMSTRONG.

THAT night Cuculain and Genānn Gruag-Sulus slept together in the same chamber, and Genānn brought into bed[1] with him his idol-gods and his instruments of

[1] See O'Curry's chapters on druidism, Vol. II. M. and C.

magic, hoping to shield his dear friend and school-fellow from the weird powers which were now abroad.

Without, a tempest raged with wind and heavy rain; but after a space Cuculain reached across his hand to the bed in which Genānn slept to awake him, but the other was not at all asleep, and Cuculain said:—

"O Genānn, there is a martial preparation forward in Emain Macha, for I hear the rumbling of wheels and the voices of captains giving commands, and more than once I heard the door of the Tayta[1] Brac opened. There is a hosting forward, and I have not been made aware of it or consulted as before. Wherefore is this?" And Cuculain started up in his bed as he spake.

Then Gruag-Sulus trembled, and his heart refused to beat; but Cuculain went on.

"There is an invasion somewhere, and they have concealed it from me, fearing that wandering clan, but if the gods permit the Clan Cailitin to slay me, they will slay me here in Emain Macha as well as on the frontier. Once before there went a host southwards to protect the marches, and they were all boys, and Beta Mac Bœn of the Olnemacta, with his people, slew them, and along the Avon Dia, between that stream and Dûndalgan, their blood was shed over the land. And now, too, there are few mature warriors left in Ulla, and if there is a war, and I not at hand, there will again be a renewal of that piteous slaughter."

But meantime Cuculain had fastened on his sandals and thrown a bratta over his shoulders, and was going to the door when Genānn sprang forward and cast his two arms around his waist, and said:—

[1] The Armoury.

"Thou shalt not go forth to-night, Cuculain, or thou shalt go forth having slain me. There are evil powers abroad against thee. This expedition is doubtless to ward off a border foray, or to pursue some vile band of cattle plunderers from the west of the Shannon. Go not abroad, O dear Setanta."

Then Cuculain laughed, and said :—

"Thou art right, O dear schoolfellow; it is not fit that I should rush forward wherever there is a sound of battle like some hardened fighters, who then only seem to live."

Cuculain lay down again and, deeming that he slept, he heard a voice[1] singing, and it said :—

"O Prince of Murthemney, O flame of the Heroes of Eiré!
What ails thee that thou art so slothful?
Arise! put on thy might as of yore.
Son of Lu, hound unconquerable, scatter thy enemies,
Scatter thy enemies, O Cu,
Cuculain Mac Sualtam."

Then Cuculain told the dream to Genánn, but Genánn knew that it was no dream, for he too had heard the voice singing.

But in the morning, those who were permitted to approach Cuculain made light of the expedition, as had Genánn Gruag Sulus, saying that it was to repel some border foray; and they laid plans to appease Cuculain's curiosity, and prevent him from going out and learning tidings of the great invasion by Meave and the son of

[1] This voice came from the weird children.

Cairbré Nia-far, and the strain put upon the whole Province to collect some resisting force.

But it seemed to them best that he should be entertained with tales of ancient heroes, to which at all times Cuculain listened gladly. Cuculain was pleased when he heard it. Moreover, the council had laid injunctions upon him, that he should not go abroad into the city and the surrounding country; and this, too, approved itself to his own judgment, for he too believed in wizardry and incantations, and the power of intercession and prayer; and he believed that Cathvah, and Genānn, and Nieve were able to draw over him some weird spiritual shield against the spiritual foe.

That day the great central chamber was set in order, and Cuculain and Emer, the queens, and the great warriors who had not yet gone away southwards, sat there, and were entertained by Heim[1] the royal bard, who for them related the history of Lu Lamfáda and the mighty eric, which he had put upon the three sons of Turānn,[2] and the sufferings of the brothers, and the implacable wrath of the mighty Ioldāna; but not of Lu Lamfáda were the thoughts of the assembly that day. To the bard Cuculain attended, carefully explaining all to Connla as the tale went on.

But when the tale was ended, then Cuculain, and Læg, and the attending knights went down to the place, in which were the young princes of Ulla, who were in fosterage with the High King; and Cuculain and Læg looked around them with great affection upon that noble

[1] He was also a warrior, and fought in the battle of Guara.

[2] There is a slight sketch of this great story given in Vol. I., p. 198. It corresponds with the labours of Hercules in Greek mythology.

park, where they knew well every nook and tree, and much they conversed with the knights who surounded them, recalling old adventures and pleasant incidents of that happy life, for as yet books had not imposed their tyranny over youthful minds; but the boys were there taught the management of steeds and chariots, and how to guide the scythed-chariot, and to close or let out the deadly shining blade, and to run forward upon the chariot-pole, also to fight from the chariot, to hurl the spear when the steeds galloped, and to protect the charioteer against a rain of blunt javelins, and how to leap swiftly and surely from the rapid chariot, and to leap thereinto again, and all that pertained to such warfare. There noble knights taught them these warlike arts, and also to charge in lines with firmly-held spears, and to move quickly and skilfully the shield, and to cast with unerring aim and immense force the battle-stone of the combatant, and all the noble exercise of that warlike age; also to swim, and to ride, and to play at chess, beside their boyish pastimes, which too were encouraged, for there were those who professed the knowledge of the laws relating to such games, and who decided disputes and awarded small erics as in weightier matters, so that they might love law and hate lawlessness.

Nor did the wise Cathvah[1] suffer their minds to lie unused while in other things they were made skilful and bold, for there they were taught to reverence the unseen people—the mountain-dwelling immortal children of Mŏr-Reega, and the descendants of Nemeth, and they learned also the history of their people, and the great

[1] He presided over this school. See M. and C., Vol. II., p. 363.

deeds of their ancestors, adorned with all that the love and reverence of the bards might suggest, and each boy knew the history of the founder of his tribe, and where inurned lay his ashes beneath the green rath, or in its house within the walled cathair, nor deemed they then that one day that earth would be removed for the cultivation of the soil, and that the stones which their pious ancestors had set up would be ravished from their place, to build fences and pave roads by a more ignoble race; and beneath many a small tunic there were nourished noble thoughts, nor deemed they that they were nobler than their sires, though they were; nor flourished then the vile teachings of Cailitin, and those who reviled the things of old; and many a bad verse was there made by heroic youths, and many an ill-constructed tale by noble boys.

But Cuculain and the knights moved onward, and he marvelled that no games or exercises were exhibited that day, for the boys went about in small groups forgetful of their daily pastimes, for there was a cloud over all Emain Macha. But when they saw Cuculain, they all ran together to him out of the remote parts of the lawn, and from amongst the trees where they listened to their elders relating the deeds of Cuculain, which he had performed and forgotten in that small theatre of his fame, and which they had themselves received from their elders, who were then his comrades and co-evals.

Around him the boys crowded, and many of them seized his hands and kissed them, and they kissed the bratta that hung from his shoulders; but after that, like a stream that bursts through some restraining barrier, their young hearts were dissolved in tears, and there

was a sound of sobbing voices around the son of Sualtam, and they said :—

"O Cuculain, they say that it is the end of thy career, and that thy victorious attributes are over, and that they who will destroy thee are returned to Erin, and as dear art thou to us as to those who went southwards[1] to the plain of the Fardia to fight for thee when the great warriors of Ulla refused to go : and we, too, would give our lives for thee if we could preserve thee from that accursed clan."

But Cuculain smiled, and said that though he should perish there would come greater warriors than himself out of that place, which was, indeed, not true, and he said that it was a false rumour, for that he should hear Mac Manar and see Rod.

The boys after that followed him to the borders of the permitted ground, and there stood looking after him as he went up to the King's palace.

But that night Cuculain's quiet spirit was troubled, and he said to Genänn :—

"I do not feel this night as I was wont to feel, O dear schoolfellow, for there is a blankness and desolation in my mind, such as one experiences when alone in a strange country, nor do I recognise in my spirit that strength and happiness which those unseen princes used to supply always before ; for I was ever aware of a spirit, not my own, with my own spirit, and this horror comes over me, that the gods themselves have forsaken me, and I think that, unwittingly, I have done some great wrong against them or against men."

[1] After the single combats described in Vol. I., the first Ultonians who went southwards against Queen Meave were two hundred of the foster-sons of Concobar Mac Nessa. See T. B. C., p. 250.

And Genānn said:—

"It is the enchantment of the Clan Cailitin that is around thee, and though our power is weak to protect thee, thou must not leave us."

And Cuculain said:—

"What is the form of Mac Manar,[1] according to the traditions of the soothsayers of Erin?"

And Gruag-Sulus said:—

"To thee and those like thee, he is young and very beautiful, and like a tender girl in feature and in limb, and of a most gentle aspect. But they say that to others he appears like a demon, more frightful and horrible than aught, which the eye of man awake or in dream hath ever seen. He carries a harp of pure gold; and against the melody of that harp they say that not even the gods themselves are secure; and it is said, too, that he is the strongest of the gods, and in the end will slay them all, for he alone is really immortal, nor was he made so by eating of the herd of Mananān, but he is immortal in his own right, and while things endure he will endure. And there is no singing so sweet as his, and no music like the music of his harp, suggesting things never seen or heard, beauty beyond all beauty, and nobleness to which the knighthood of earth may not be compared, and visions of love and bliss, and of worlds fair and good. Such virtues the soothsayers of Erin say reside in the strings of that harp."

And Cuculain said:—

[1] Æd Orphid, Æd of the golden harp was his real name. Eefeen, a fairy-princess, gave him the harp. He lived at one time at Shee Canuta in Connaught (place not identified).

"That is well, O Genānn, he shall not find me unprepared."

But again that night Cuculain heard the tramp of armed men, and the hoarse voices of those who gave command, and the rolling of wheels, and the distant noise of martial preparation; for from the ends of the Province, from Assaroe, in the west, Dûn Sobharcy in the north-east, and Aula Neid, beside the Foyle, were arriving continually—cohorts of warriors, the residue of the Clanna Rury, moving southwards to resist the great invasion, and they were ordered to enter Emain Macha by night, and thence, being armed and instructed, they went southwards to the frontier.

Then a fiery wrath possessed Cuculain, and a fierce tide of angry blood raced through his veins, and he started forth with a cry, and said:—

"Ye are deceiving me, and I am surrounded with traitors and liars; there is a great invasion from the south, and ere this my realm is overrun, and my people are slain and made captive, and the territory which I have sworn to defend is made desolate."

But Genānn cried out, too, but in terror, and he said:—

"What is this, O Cu, that has come over thee, that thou standest thus aghast and pallid, and thy eyes are like burning fires beneath thy brow?"

But Cuculain answered him not.

And Genānn said again:—

"Rouse thyself, O Cu, it is the Clan Cailitin enchanting thee."

And Cuculain said:—

"Didst thou not see them, O Genānn?"

And Genānn said, "Whom?"

"Lû himself in that form in which he came to me before, but now more distinct, and that awful Queen who they say rules over the gods. They stood before me and said:—

"'O Cuculain, thy people are slain and made captive, and thy dûn is dismantled and thy territory eaten up, for Erc, with all the nobles and warriors of Meath and Mac Nia, and Lewy Mac Conroy with the Ernai and the Clan Dēga, and that bitter and relentless Queen with the might of the Fir-bolgs and the Clan Humōr, have invaded Murthemney, and why dost thou delay to go out against them as of yore, for we are still with thee?'"

But while he still spake, Cuculain moved his head round slowly and said:—

"What music and singing is this that I hear in the dim mysterious night? I have not heard such at any time;" and so he stood listening, while he still held Genānn, and the voice sang, heard indeed by Cuculain, but unheard by Genānn:—

"Day ends in night, and the sun in the breast of Lir,
The might of the warrior will not save him when his end comes.
Hearken, O Hound, to the strains of Mac Manar!
It is for thee I sing, O Cu,
Cuculain Mac Sualtam."

Then Cuculain approached the window, and he saw Mac Manar in the moon-light—him who would slay even the gods—and that harp in his slender hands, all golden.

And Cuculain said :—

"It is enough, O school-fellow, my end is come. I shall perish in this battle, but the high gods of Erin are around me, and I shall die, as I have lived, under their hands."

So spake Cuculain in his ignorance, trusting in phantoms, for they, the Tuátha of Erin, were far from him that night, watching with sad eyes as the shadows closed around the hero. So speaking, he burst back the door with its bolts and bars, rending them in sunder with his great irresistible hands; but outside were innumerable faces, the faces of strong resolute men close round the door, for they watched there nightly, and Cu was amazed when he saw them; but Genānn took him by the hand and said :—

"O Cuculain, it is already morn; wait now till the day is fully come, and then thou shalt go southwards against the enemy. But these warriors will be slain ere they suffer thee to pass."

Cuculain lay down again till the day was fully come, and Cathvah came into the chamber, and they told him what had happened during the night, and Cathvah and Genānn both said that it was by the enchantment of the Clan Cailitin that he had seen the divine appearances; but Cuculain was silent, for he believed them not, making preparations, and he went into Læg's chamber, and cried out to Læg to arise, but Læg was still sleeping, and he demanded from Fion-Cu the key of the Tayta Brac, where were his arms; but Fion-Cu had put away the key, and Cuculain said :—

"It boots not, O Fion-Cu. Thou shalt but gain employment in the afternoon for the King's kerd to repair the injury."

Eion-Cu opened the door of the resounding chamber, and the shield of Cuculain had fallen from its rack in the night. Then Cuculain returned to Læg, who was still asleep, and Cuculain looked upon him sleeping, and said :—

"I alone have heard Mac Manar, and to me only has the warning come. Yet thou, O dear comrade and charioteer, wouldst answer with clamour and insult were I to announce that I will go alone upon this expedition, or take with me another than thee. Very elate and insolent wert thou on that day when thou wast made my charioteer, and thou didst vex the souls of thy brothers, Sheeling, the charioteer of Legairé, and Id, the charioteer of Conaill, saying, that to thee was entrusted the care of the bravest of the Red Branch, exasperating the minds of thy elders, and thou hast done and said many vain-glorious things therefore ; but now thou shalt perish in Murthemney before them, guiding my steeds through the battle : but I thought not our death should be so soon, but that thou wouldst grow old with me at Dûn-Dalgan, and I marvelled how years would change thy mood, but now we shall die together on the southern marches, holding the gates of Ulla against the South, which has been our task always and appointed duty. Sleep on awhile now, for bitter will be thy waking, O dear comrade."

So spake Cuculain above the sleeping warrior ; but Læg turned his face to the wooden partition, and composed himself again to slumber.

Then Cuculain went forth again ; but in the court, between the Crave Rue and the Tayta Brac, there met him the queens of the Ultonian kings, who had come

to Emain Macha, both those whose husbands had gone abroad with Conaill Carna, and those whose warriors fought now on the southern frontier against the great host of Erc and Queen Meave, and the High Queen of all Ulla was with them, and Nieve, the prophetess, and Einey Inûva, a very dear friend, and one of those who sat weeping beside his couch when the Red Branch brought him back out of Mid-luhara, where he wandered naked, stricken by the Shee. There Nieve,[1] the beautiful prophetess, approached him, and took him by the hand, and said:—

"O Cuculain, we have heard of the vision, and of thy determined resolve which we cannot gainsay, but we have this one request to make of thee, namely, that thou shalt postpone thy departure till the morrow, and that thou shalt go this day to Glan-na-mōhar[2] where Cathvah has his druidic abode, and I shall consult the auguries of the soothsayers of Ulla this night, and in the morning I shall announce to thee their purport. For here there is an enchantment around thee, and thy spirit is confused by the Clan Cailitin; but there the power of Cathvah will be greater to defend thee, and I shall give thee a true answer from the auguries, and this request I urge on behalf of the women of Ulla, for, though to the rest of Eiré thy name is a terror, and though the warlike tribes of Ulla worship thee like a god, yet none have been so faithful to thee as we, and we have guarded thy renown, and rebuked every slander, for thou hast been like a dear brother to those of us who are young,

[1] Gælicé, Niam, the daughter of Kelkar, son of Uther.

[2] "The dogs' glen." I do not know the position of this glen.

and like a child to those of us who are old, and our love towards thee may not be told, O dear Setanta. For of those who clave to Concobar Mac Nessa in the great rebellion thou alone wert gentle[1] to the unhappy daughter of Felim; and as was the commencement of thy career so has it been up to this, and now, O Cuculain, be persuaded, and grant this last favour to us."

But Cuculain saw, behind the rest, where stood the daughter of Forgal Manah, pale and tearful, and he yielded to that petition.

But after that they passed northwards to Glan-na-mōhar, Cathvah and Ferceirtney, Genānn Gruag-sulus and Nieve the daughter of Kelkar, and Cuculain, and Læg; and Nieve was joyful that day, for she said that the Clan Cailitin would be overpowered in that glen.

But that night Cuculain saw no visions, and Cathvah shed a veil over the glen, an emanation of the Fayd-fia of Goibneen; but the eyes of Genānn Gruag-sulus were opened that night, and he saw in spirit the Clan Cailitin traversing all Ulla, and like hounds on the track searching every valley and hill-side, and every dark wood seeking Cuculain, and alone upon his bed he trembled excessively like one sick of an ague, overcome with great fear, and he prayed earnestly to the immortal people that night, and practised his wizard arts; but Cathvah and Nieve sat together sleepless all the night, deeming in their fond minds that they could shield the son of Sualtam.

In the grey of the morning then came a woman to

[1] Cuculain is mentioned as meeting Deirdré after the death of the sons of Usna, and endeavouring to comfort her. See Publications of Gælic Society.

Nieve, and desired her to leave the Dûn with her, for that she had tidings of great moment to communicate; and Nieve went out with the woman, for she deemed that she was the daughter of Finntann Nac Niel who had come with her to Glan-na-mōhar, but ere long she found herself wandering alone in the glen, and a dense mist all around.

For the veil of invisibility covered not the paddock in which the steeds were, and the Clan Cailitin shrieked on the mountain-tops, when they saw beneath them in the glen the two great steeds of Cuculain, and by their enchantments they withdrew the prophetess from the dun.

But about the same time Cuculain awoke, and he dressed himself and went out, and there met him at the door, as he deemed, the daughter of Kelkar the son of Uther, even Nieve the fair-haired prophetess, and she said :—

"Gird on thy armour now, O son of Sualtam, for the high gods of Erin are around thee. Go forth as of yore, for thou shalt pursue the host of Meave southwards beyond the Boyne, and shalt slay Erc and Mac Nia, and Lewy Mac Conroi, and work deliverance for us as heretofore."

Then was Cuculain glad, and hastened forward the departure, and Læg ran to the paddock and cried to the horses as was his wont, throwing back the barred gate; but the steeds at the other end of the field stood stock still like sulky mules, and they stood facing one another hard by the fence.

Then was Læg angry and ran forward to where they were, and black Shanglan went behind the Liath Macha,

and as Læg tried to seize the Liath Macha he presented to him his side, and so moved round refusing to be taken, and Læg was astonished at this and said :—

" What is this, O Liath Macha, that has come upon thee ? Never hast thou been thus with me before, for high-spirited, and docile, and light of foot wert thou ever yet when I summoned thee, but now thou art mulish and sulky, and like a farmer's rough garran."

And Læg again sprang at him to hold him, and he became fierce and intractable, and after that he fled before him keeping along the fence ; and also the Dûvyeelan fled with him, keeping by the fence inside the Liath Macha. And Læg said :—

" This is an evil foreboding."

Then he returned to the Dûn, and Cuculain himself came down to the field, and he stood in the gateway, and lifted up his clear-toned voice, but the steeds stirred not, and the Liath Macha held down his head, and all his foam-white mane drooped down to the ground, and Cuculain approached and caressed him, and there fell from the eyes of the steed, blood-stained tears,[1] while he caressed him, and after that Læg led in the steeds, but they went slowly and reluctantly.

Now when Læg entered the chariot house, he found the great chariot-pole broken in twain ; for the Mōr Reega had passed that way in the night and snapped it with her mighty hands, a warning to the heroes. But Læg fastened the parts roughly together until he should reach Emain Macha.

Læg harnessed the steeds, and so they drave on

[1] R. I. A., XXIII. E. 4, p. 219. *Cf.* the weeping of the horses of Achilles.

to Emain Macha, and the sun was just rising as they left Glan-na-mōhar. But as they travelled Cuculain said to Læg:—

"I marvel much, O Læg, remembering the appearance and face of Nieve, the prophetess, as she spake with me this day."

And Læg said:—

"That is true, O Setanta; for though I honour her above all the women of Ulla, save thy own wife, I felt towards her this day a strange repulsion. Yet glad was I when she gave thee the word to go southwards."

And Cuculain said:—

"Her form was indeed the same, but I missed the strangely sweet smile with which she is accustomed to converse, and the glory that is shed from her pale, pure countenance; also, in her voice, that strange trembling, as though she ever repressed inward tears, and in her haviour that swift brightness as of one who, at a word, might pass forth from the world and mingle with those children of the mountains who are invisible and immortal."

After that they drave rapidly onward, and it was noon when they reached the King's Dûn, and there their hearts were again fretted by the mourning and the tearful faces. But Cuculain took Emer aside, that no one might witness their separation, and he said:—

"O Emer, not so soon did I deem that a darkness should overwhelm thy bright life, or that thou wouldst be left a widow in thy youth. Not such I deemed would be thy lot when I tempted thee to fly from thy father's dûn, and when thou gavest up all for my sake. But much already hast thou suffered being the wife of

a warrior, though thou wert not by nature formed to suffer but to be glad."

But Emer, speechless, clung to him still weeping, and he charged her that she should send Connla to Alba to be instructed by Eefa,[1] who had also instructed himself, and after that he disengaged himself from her, and kissed her, and also Connla and Fionscōta, but the boy asked him, "Whether he would not return again soon?" and Cuculain said that until he returned Connla should be a protector to his mother, and Connla said that he would, and so went forth Cuculain; and he sprang into his chariot, and Læg let the steeds go, and the loud wheels brayed through the city, which was lined with children, and women, and unwarlike people, and there was a vast and confused clamour and mourning along the streets as they went, instead of the shouts which had so often greeted him there. And as they emerged from the city towards the east Cuculain looked back upon the city, and he said:—

"O city of my heart, O nurse of heroes, Emain of the Red Branch, how often have I come unto thee bearing victory and spoils, and now I leave thee with a heavy heart, and depressed. It is our last journey, O Læg. We shall not go back again to this dear city, O Læg. We shall not return to Emain Macha any more."

After that they went to the palace of Dethcœn, Cuculain's nurse, for he was accustomed to visit her ere he went abroad to war.

As they crossed a tributary of the Oun Callân, they

[1] This was the daughter of Skathach, Skaah, in Vol. I., see pp. 165, 185, 234. She and her mother were of those warlike druidesses numerous in the time that I am describing. See R. I. A., 23, E. 3, p. 139, *et seq.*

saw two beautiful maidens in the stream washing, and one of them held up a lēna in both her hands which was pierced and torn, and where the holes were there were bloody stains, and the stains would not come out for all their washing, and Cuculain said :—

"No other omens are needed now; I have heard Mac Manār, and Rod too I shall see in his own time."

As they passed Rath Fohla it is said that they saw a vision of the angels of God singing.[1]

After that they drave on again, and they arrived at Slieve Few;[2] and it was upon that mountain that Cuculain had first seized the Liath Macha, for he found him there grazing beside the lake on the hill side, and he sprang upon him and seized him by the long white mane, and that was said to have been the most desperate struggle in which he was ever engaged, for the divine steed, having been seized, fought with him and fled; but he could not release himself from his grasp; and Cuculain subdued him to his hand, and tamed his mighty soul; but the country all around there was uncultivated and woody, and it was evening when they reached it, and the gloaming of the day.

And Læg said :—

"This is a hill of which the poets sing many things."

And Cuculain said :—

"We can well believe them looking upon it, for it is nobler and more lovely than the mountains of Eiré. It

[1] This is an addition of some Christian bard. It was on Rath Fohla that St. Patrick's Monastery was situated in the modern city of Armagh. The legend says that the heroes' hearts went forth in sympathy with that singing, so that God showed his mercy upon them.

[2] Gaticé, Fuad.

was my road-post when first I sought Emain Macha, escaping by night without the knowledge of my mother. Therefore has it been always dear and venerable to me from a boy, and it is the home of happy and benignant spirits. The summit is sacred to Lir, and is called the Shee Fionahán,[1] and they say that Lir has there his fairy palace which no man may see; and it was from thence his children set forth with their step-mother to visit Bove Derg at his fairy palace upon the Galtees, on that journey in which, at Derryvara,[2] they were so cruelly transformed. I myself have heard them singing in the northern seas, and I then thought I never heard music so sweet or so sad."

And he also said :—

"I never saw Slieve Few so beautiful as this night, for all its sacred dells and heathery promontories are lit up with the gold-red rays of the setting sun."

So conversed the warriors, for the sun was then setting, and shed a golden glow over that noble hill where dwelt Lir and his people unseen in its fair mysterious folds.

But as they travelled they saw a smoke on the edge of the wood that ascended not into the still air, but lay low, hovering around the leafless trees, and soon they saw where a party of wandering outcasts had made their encampment beside the wood, and they sat around the fire cooking, for a brazen pot was suspended from a

[1] *i.e.*, "Home of gods, of the beautiful field." Lir was probably worshipped here. I think this Lir was the sea-god, though Professor O'Curry thought not.

[2] Lake Derryvara in Westmeath. See Dr. Joyce's "Celtic Romances."

branch between forked supporters, and they were cooking their evening meal.

And Læg said:—

"Methinks I never saw such miserable wanderers as these. There are three men and three women all very old, and wretched, and meanly clad."

But when the outcasts saw Cuculain, they lifted up their voices in a harsh and dissonant chorus, and said:—

"Right well have we chosen our encampment, O mighty Prince, for we said that this way thou wouldst go down to the battle, and we knew that no arts or persuasions would restrain thee that thou shouldst not come out, as of yore, to the assistance of thy people. Hail to thee, O Cuculain, O flame of the heroes of Eiré, and to thee, O illustrious son of Riangowra."

But as they spake they all stood up, and they were very hideous to look upon, marred, as Cuculain and Læg thought, by some evil destiny. They were clad in the skins of black he-goats, and on the breast of each, instead of pin or brooch, was the shank-bone of a heron, or a swan, or such like bird; their arms and legs were lean and bony, but their hands and feet large, and they were all maimed in the right hand and the right foot.

But Cuculain answered them as was his wont, for many such a greeting had he received from unwarlike people and outcasts, for such especially cherished his glory. Then, as Læg was urging on the steeds, one limped forward and stood before the steeds and said:—

"O Cuculain, partake with us of our poor repast, not meet for princes, but such as we outcasts can procure

trapping wild animals; and we ourselves are like wild animals hunted to and fro. They say indeed that in many a poor man's cot thou hast eaten food, and sat beside many a humble fire, not knowing thy own greatness."

And Cuculain said:—

"The night is already upon us, O Læg, and we cannot travel further, let us not insult these unhappy people, maimed and outcast, by refusing what they offer."

Læg reluctantly consented, and unharnessed the steeds from the great war-car, having first brought it beside a stream that ran down from that sacred lake upon the mountain, and he washed the chariot-wheels carefully, and dried them, and spread a covering over the chariot to protect it from the dew, and he returned to Cuculain, who sat beside the fire amongst the outlaws, for it was cold, and he was chill from sitting all day in the war-car. Nevertheless he was not warmed by the fire.

But Cuculain was glad when the charioteer drew nigh, for he was distressed at the conversation of those homeless people, and their countenances, and their forms, for their wretchedness sat lightly upon them, and they were very gay, and mirthful, as they sat holding the flesh on skewers of the rowan tree over the embers, and they made obscene jests, and answered in a language which he could not comprehend, and it seemed to him that the women were worse than the men. Moreover, the sun set, and the darkness came down, and mysterious sounds came from the sacred hill, the noise of the trees, and of the falling water, and he saw nought but these unlovely faces around.

When the flesh was cooked they gave a portion to Cuculain, and he eat thereof, but Læg refused with an oath. Then these outcasts laughed and sprang to their feet, and they joined hands around them twain, and danced upon their misshapen feet, and sang :—

> " Sisters and brothers, join hands, he is ours;
> Let the charm work, he is ours.
> A rath in Murthemney holds twenty-eight sculls—
> Work on, little charm, he is ours !"

" Hast thou heard, Cuculain, of Clan Cailitin ?"

But Cuculain drew his sword, crying :—

" O brood of hell, see now if your charms are proof against keen bronze."

But they bounded away nimbly like goats, and still encircled him, singing. Then one plunged into the wood, and all followed ; and there was cracked obscene laughter in the forest, and then silence ; only the noise of the wind in the trees, and the gentle murmur of the stream, lit now with the beam of the rising moon. Cuculain stood panting, and very pallid, with wide eyes; but Læg crouched upon the ground.

And Cuculain said :—

" They are gone, O Læg. It was some horrible vision. Here was the fire where the grass is yet unburned, and there is no trace of the rowan-tree spits, or of the flesh."

But Læg with difficulty recovered himself, and spake with a stammering tongue, and they found there no trace of the encampment of the outcasts save the skin of a wolf lately slain.

And Cuculain said :—

"I marvel, O Læg, how the mighty and righteous Lir, to whom this mountain is sacred, can suffer within his precincts that horrid brood. O mountain-dwelling, unseen king, shield us at least within thy own borders against these powers of darkness."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE END.

"DOWN where the broad Zambesi river
Glides away into some shadowy lagoon
Lies the antelope, and hears the leaflets quiver,
Shaken by the sultry breath of noon,
Hears the sluggish water ripple in its flowing,
Feels the atmosphere with fragrance all opprest,
Dreams his dreams, and the sweetest is the knowing
That above him, and around him, there is rest."

PERCY SOMERS PAYNE.[1]

CUCULAIN and Læg slept not that night; and as they spake concerning those withered people, Læg said that such a brood could never have been the children of Cailitin whom he had known; but Cuculain said, "Nay, O Læg, these devils are his true children;" and again he said, "But, lo! now the Mourne hills eastward are grey with the growing dawn, let us proceed straightway, for now there is sufficient light to avoid the chasms and wet places until we reach the road that leads into Dûn-dalgan."

[1] The author of these beautiful lines was the son of Somers H. Payne, rector of Upton, County of Cork. His early death has been, I believe, a serious loss to Anglo-Irish literature.

Then Læg harnessed the steeds and yoked the chariot, and they went forward, and Læg was perpetually restoring the weapons to their places, for they were disarranged, and this he did secretly, that he might not increase the sadness of Cuculain, for it was an evil omen; but Cuculain observing it, said:—

"It matters not, O Læg, I have heard the music of Mac Manar, and ere long I shall see that son of Lir. We go down now to die upon the plains of Murthemney, but Lu Lam-fáda and the great goddess, the Mōr Reega, go with us, and from our death thenceforward we shall be under their protection."

As it grew light, and as the war-car and the heroes were seen, there was a great change in all the territories through which they passed. For before them the land was desolate and forsaken, and neither cattle nor men might be seen, only empty fields and deserted homesteads; but behind them there were cattle and sheep in all the fields, and the craftsman wrought, and the tillers of the soil and pastoral tribes attended to their labours, the hamlets received back their inhabitants, and children sported in their accustomed play-grounds. For a many-voiced rumour went abroad, and the forests and mountain fastnesses and the strongholds of the lakes [1] yielded up their fugitives, when men heard that the great champion had gone southwards against the host of Meave.

It was about noon when Cuculain and Læg beheld the first signs of the invasion, and saw afar the lurid

[1] These strongholds were called in Irish "crannoges." They were built on piles or on moored rafts. The celebrated Finn Mac Cool is represented as taking refuge in one of these lake strongholds in Leinster when, a boy, he concealed himself from the wrath of the Clanna Morna, his hereditary foes.

smoke of conflagrations, and heard the distant noise of battle. Then the old heroic rage burned in their hearts, and Læg unfolded and closed the glittering scythes, to see if they would work freely, urging on the steeds, and Cuculain stood erect in the chariot, looking southwards, and he cried:—

"O Dûn-dalgan, Dûn-dalgan, thou city of my sires, my own city, how red now are thy consuming flames; but on the other march there shall be a red eric for thy destruction, when the Boyne shall receive the hosts of that bitter and relentless queen, and their horses shall trample down their footmen, and mariners out in the Murinet will wonder at the ruddy tide which those sacred waters will roll down to the sea. O Erc the Fair-haired, and thou Lewy Mac Conroi, returning now into Mid-Erin, ye will pray that your horses may be swifter than hawks. On, on, O royal-hearted Læg, the Tuátha of Erin are around us this day, Lu Lam-fáda on the right, and on the left that mighty queen who rules over the gods, and above us that strong god[1] who showed his mercy upon me

[1] There is a strange story, pregnant with psychological and historical meaning, of how the gods of Inver Amargin, *i.e.*, the mouth of the Ovoca, summoned Cuculain into fairyland to protect them from an invasion of northern demoniac powers, and how Cuculain, having routed these, was seized with oblivion of his previous life, and dwelt in the invisible world, having a goddess for his bride, but that, eventually, he was cast out from heaven, and fell in the wilderness of Mid-Lúhara, in Murthemney. "It was then," says the legend, "that Cuculain gave the three high leaps, and the three south leaps of Murthemney," slew those sent to take him, and abode naked in the wilderness. After this he was brought to Emain Macha, and lay there twelve months with wandering thoughts. Eventually Mananān, son of Lir, the god of the sea, waved over him his magic mantle and restored him.

We see here an attempt, which failed, to transfer the hero into the

when I fell in the wilderness of Mid-Lúhara. O Liath Macha, my precious one, on the heaven-kissing mountain I took thee.[1] The forests crashed around us contending, the spirits of Lough Liath arose at the noise of our strife, and the daughter of Cuilin roared, but I clung to thee and held thee, and subdued thee, O fairy steed."

And Læg answered:—

"What is this that has come upon thee, O Cu? I have not heard thee thus vaunting at any time."

So Cuculain vaunted, for his mind was disturbed by the enchantments; but suddenly he ceased, and, stooping, seized Læg by the shoulder with his left hand, so that he cried out for the pain, and Cuculain said:—

"They have departed, O Læg; but now I said that beside our galloping steeds they went with us to the battle; but they have deceived us and deserted us. Dost thou hear that laughter? We are forsaken."[2]

Then Cuculain turned round in the chariot all flaming, and roared against the high gods of Fail, and the peal of that cry resounded across Erin; but there was no

rank of the gods. The immediate origin of the legend was probably a fit of melancholia, oppressing Cuculain with its consequent fancies and imaginations, and which was attributed to the gods.

[1] The seizure of the Liath Macha by Cuculain is described in the Feast of Bricrind. Cuculain and the Liath Macha, sang the bards, encircled Erin in that strife. There is a vastness and greatness in the bardic treatment of heroes to which I have not found myself able to ascend. The tomb or temple of the Liath Macha was on the Boyne, but it was on Slieve Fuad that Cuculain seized him.

[2] The Clan Cailitin took upon themselves the forms of Cuculain's patron deities, that they might seduce him to Murthemney. They also held perpetually before his mind a vision of his territory ravaged by the men of Meave.

answer, only echoes in the hollow folds of the mountain, and once again, made mad with sorrow and rage, Cuculain roared a challenge against the immortal gods, but again his voice fell to a hoarse whisper, and leaning past Læg in the the war-car, he said:—

"Who art thou? I like not thy sleepy eyes and dusky tresses. Thou art not a pleasant or profitable companion for one who enters into the battle."

But there answered him a voice, saying:—

"I am Rod,[1] son of the boundless Lir. It was foretold that thou shouldst see me, and I alone of the Tuátha Dē Danān will go with thee into this battle, and I shall be with thee to the end."

Then Cuculain bowed his head in the chariot and wept, and said:—

"O Læg, the end of all is come, and this supreme horror, that even the gods themselves should have deserted us."

Then there approached the flying scattered battalions of the Red Branch, driven out of Murthemney by the great host of Meave, and Cuculain stayed them, and re-formed their broken bands in the mountains of Coolney, breathing into them his own unconquerable soul.

Ere dawn the next day he climbed into the Eagle's Nest; and it was there that the men of Meave first saw him revealed in the light of the rising sun, and their host was confused at the sight, when they beheld him afar, and they retired into Conaill Murthemney. It was with difficulty, after they saw Cuculain, that their captains prevailed upon them to risk a battle against him.

After this Cuculain defeated the host of Meave in

[1] R. I. A., 23, E. 4, p. 199.

seven great battles on the plains of Murthemney, and the tombs of those he slew are scattered over all that land. Many times he drave them southwards to the Boyne, but they were reinforced from mid-Erin, and the Ultonians who fell were not replaced. But on the eighth day, Cuculain looking round, saw the remnant of the Red Branch overwhelmed, and it was about five miles south and west of Dún-dalgan.

More terrible than at any other time was the son of Sualtam in those battles which he entered in the naked majesty of his irresistible strength, shorn of his glory, and having lost his magic attributes, for this time he went to war like one who has devoted himself to death. Around him the shadows thickened, but like a light in darkness, his valour shone the brighter as before his fast-lessening warriors he charged the armies of the great Queen. Over the plains of Murthemney, between Dún-dalgan and the Boyne, pealed the voice of the son of Sualtam, shouting amid his warriors, and ever the southern host gave way before him, and their battalions were confused.

Then northward in the hills collected the people of Ulla, the unwarlike tribes, seeing afar that one hero, and the fast-lessening ranks of the Ultonians, where the great champion of the north fought on against the immense overflowing host of the Four Provinces.

But as the Ultonians grew less in the dread conflict, the southern warriors precipitated themselves upon Cuculain, and like a great rock over which rolls some mighty billow of the western sea, so was Cuculain often submerged in their overflowing tide; and as with the down-sinking billow the same rock reappears in its in-

vincible greatness, and the white brine runs down its stubborn ribs, so the son of Sualtam perpetually reappeared scattering and destroying his foes. Then crashed his battle mace through opposing shields; then flew the foam-flakes from his lips over his reddened garments; baleful shone his eyes beneath his brows, and his voice died away in his throat till it became a hoarse whisper. Often too Læg charged with the war-car, and extricated him surrounded, and the mighty steeds tramped down opposing squadrons, and many a southern hero was transfixed with the chariot-spear, or divided by the brazen scythes.

It was on the eighth day, two hours after noon, that Cuculain raising his eyes beheld where the last of the Red Branch were overwhelmed, and he and Læg were abandoned and alone, and he heard Læg shouting, for he was surrounded by a battalion, and Cuculain hastened back to defend him, and sprang into the chariot, bounding over the rim, and extended Fabâne above him on the left. There he intercepted three javelins cast against the charioteer by a Lagenian band; but Erc, son of Cairbré Nia-far, pursued him, and at the same time cast his spear from the right. Through Cuculain it passed, breaking through the battle-shirt and the waist-piece, and it pierced his left side between the hip-bone and the lowest rib, and transfixed Læg in the stomach above the naval. Then fell the reins from the hands of Læg.

"How is it with thee, O Læg?" said then Cuculain.

And Læg answered:—

"I have had enough this time, O my dear master. Truly thou hast fulfilled thy vow, for it it was through thee that I have been slain."

Then Cuculain cut through the spear-tree with his colg, and tore forth the tree out of himself; but meantime, Lewy Mac Conroi stabbed black Shanglan with his red hands, driving the spear through his left side, behind the shoulder, and Shanglan fell, overturning the war-car, and Cuculain sprang forth, but as he sprang, Lewy Mac Conroi pierced him through the bowels. Then fell the great hero of the Gæl.

Thereat the sun darkened, and the earth trembled, and a wail of agony from immortal mouths shrilled across the land, and a pale panic smote the vast host of Meave when, with a crash, fell that pillar of heroism, and that flame of the warlike valour of Erin was extinguished. Then too from his slain comrade brake forth the Liath Macha, for, like a housewife's thread, the divine steed brake the traces, and the brazen chains, and the yoke, and bounded forth neighing, and three times he encircled the heroes, trampling down the host of Meave. Afar then retreated the host, and the Liath Macha, wearing still the broken collar, went back into the realms of the unseen, and entered his house upon the Boyne, where, since the ancient days, was his mysterious dwelling-place.

But Cuculain kissed Læg, and Læg, dying, said :—

"Farewell, O dear master, and schoolfellow. Till the end of the world no servant will ever have a better master than thou hast been to me."

And Cuculain said :—

"Farewell, O dear Læg. The gods of Erin have deserted us, and the Clan Cailitin are now abroad, and what will happen to us henceforward I know not. But true and faithful thou hast ever been to me, and it is

now seventeen years since we plighted friendship, and no angry word has ever passed between us since then."

Then the spirit went out of Læg, and he died, and Cuculain, raising his eyes, saw thence northwestward, about two hundred yards, a small lake called Loch-an-Tanaigté,[1] and he tore forth from himself the bloody spear, and went staggering, and at times he fell, nevertheless he reached the lake, and stooped down and drank a deep draught of the pure cold water, keen with frost, and the burning fever in his veins was allayed. After that he arose, and saw northwards from the lake a tall pillar-stone, the grave of a warrior slain there in some ancient war, and its name was Carrig-an-Compan. When Cuculain first saw it there was standing upon it a grey-necked crow, which retired as he approached. With difficulty he reached it, and he leaned awhile against the pillar, for his mind wandered, and he knew nothing for a space.

After that he took off his brooch, and, removing the torn bratta, he passed it round the top of the pillar, where there was an indentation in the stone, and passed the ends under his arms and around his breast, tying with languid hands a loose knot, which soon was made fast by the weight of the dying hero.[2] But the host of Meave, when they beheld him, retired again, for they

[1] This lake is in a district called Raheady, and about two miles from Dundalk, on the road between that town and Louth. After the death of Cuculain it was called Loch an Cladav, the lake of the sword. See R. I. A.. 23 E. 4, p. 261. Cuculain cast his sword into it.

[2] "That he might not die in his sitting or lying, but that he might die in his standing."—*Ancient Bard.* See Mr. Hennessy's Article on the war-goddess. I am not certain that this is the true explanation of the manner of his death.

said that he was immortal, and that Lu Lamfada would once more come down out of fairyland to his aid, and that they would wreak a terrible vengeance. So afar they retreated, when they beheld him standing with the drawn sword in his hand, and the rays of the setting sun bright on his panic-striking helmet. So stood Cuculain, even in death-pangs, a terror to his enemies, and the bulwark of his nation.

Now, as Cuculain stood dying, a stream of blood trickled from his wounds, and ran in devious ways down to the lake, and poured its tiny red current into the pure water; and as Cuculain looked upon it, thinking many things in his deep mind, there came forth an otter out of the reeds of the lake and approached the pebbly strand, where the blood flowed into the water, having been attracted thither by the smell, and at the point where the blood flowed into the lake, he lapped up the life-blood of the hero, looking up from time to time, after the manner of a dog feeding. Which seeing, Cuculain gazed upon the otter, and he smiled for the last time, and said :—

"O thou greedy water-dog, often in my boyhood have I pursued thy race in the rivers and lakes of Murthemney; but now thou hast a full eric, who drinkest the blood of me dying. Nor do I grudge thee this thy bloody meal. Drink on, thou happy beast. To thee, too, doubtless, there will some time be an hour of woe."

Then to Cuculain appeared a vision, and he deemed that he saw Læg approaching, riding alone on black Shanglan, and he was glad therefore, and he deemed that Læg applied healing salves to his wounds. And Cuculain said :—

"Go now straightway to Emain Macha, O Læg, and say to Concobar that I here in Murthemney will contend till I perish against the invaders of Ulla, and give my benediction to my uncle, the great King of the Ultonians, and to all the Red Branch; and go to Emer and tell her not to weep for me, but to let her grief be of short duration, and that I will remember her while life endures."

Then to Cuculain it seemed that Læg, frowning, said:—

"Surely, O Cu, thy peerless and noble wife, beautiful Emer, thou wouldst never forget."

After that Cuculain deemed that Læg went off to Emain Macha, and that he heard the sound of the hoofs afar, going northwards, and a terrible loneliness and desolation came over his mind, and again he saw the faces of that wandering clan, and they laughed around him, and taunted him, and said:—

"Thus shalt thou perish, O Hound, and thus shall all like thee be forsaken and deserted, and they shall perish in loneliness and sorrow. An early death and desolation shall be their lot, for we are powerful over men and over gods, and the kingdom that is seen, and the kingdom that is unseen belong to us," and they ringed him round, and chaunted obscene songs, and triumphed.

Nevertheless they terrified him not, for a deep spring of stern valour was opened in his soul, and the might of his unfathomable spirit sustained him.

Then was Cuculain aware that the Clan Cailitin had retired, as though in fear, and there stood beside him a child, having a strange aspect, and he took Cuculain by the hand, and said:—

"Regard not these children of evil, O my brother, their dominion is but for a time."

And Cuculain said :—

"What god art thou who hast conquered the Clan Cailitin ?"

Thus perished Cuculain—"mild, handsome, invincible," "cœv, aulin, cinlăca."[1]

* * * * * *

Night on the moony billows of the Moyle. Southwards from the Albán coasts speed swiftly a fleet of galleys, bearing each ship the Red Hand of Emain Macha. On the floor of the sea the white creaming foam is cast afar in their wake. A thousand oars bound angrily forward, with a fierce noise unceasing, where the strong ashen trees strain in the rowlocks. Silence in every ship. Through the long night not a voice heard. The Ultonians returning into Erin to take vengeance for the death of Cuculain.

Then commenced the "Darig Ruhar Conaill Carna," the Red Route of Conaill, against Erc, son of Cairbré Nia-far, and Lewy, son of Curoi Mac Dary, and against the two sons of Finn, King of the Lagenians.

[1] "Gælicé, caom, alainn, coingleacac."

APPENDED NOTES.

THE materials of the foregoing account of Cuculain and the Red Branch are chiefly the "Manuscript Materials of Irish History," by Professor O'Curry; his treatise on the "Manners and Customs of the ancient Irish," in two volumes, with a Preface by Professor Sullivan, occupying a third volume. In these works an immense number of significant passages from the bardic literature have been collected and classified. Also the "Publications of the Ossianic Society," six volumes; the "Publications of the Gælic Society," one volume; the tales translated by O'Curry in the "New Atlantis;" his translation of the "Battle of Moy Leana, published separately; the "Book of Rights," translated by O'Donovan; Dr. Petrie's treatise on the "Antiquities of Tara," with important passages from the bardic literature there collected; the letters of the "Ordnance Survey," which contain in manuscript a considerable portion of the ancient literature; the "Crowe Manuscripts," in which will be found two very ancient and valuable tales—the "Feast of Bricrind," and the "Bruidin da Derga;" the Manuscript Translation of the "Tán-bo-Cooalney;" the Manuscript Translation of the "Great Breach of Murthemney, and the Education of Cuculain;" the stories published in the *Revue Celtique*, and Mr. Hennessy's paper on the "War-Goddess," in the same

journal; the "History of Keating and the Four Masters, down to the date of Cuculain," and the "Annals of Tighernach," (written Tierna in Vol. I., and Tiherna in Vol. II.); the "Precepts of Cormac Mac Art," translated by O'Donovan in the *Dublin Penny Journal*; the "Brehon Laws," published by the Government; and the various publications of the *Kilkenny Archæological Journal*.

There is a mediæval legend that a vision of Christ was seen by Cuculain, and that Cuculain and Læg appeared in a phantom chariot before the people of Emain Macha after his last battle, and announced the coming of the Talkend. On the other hand, see the wonderful legend in which St. Patrick is represented as opening the gates of hell, and the vision, seen by Lægairé Mac Niel, of Cuculain and the Ultonians in the realms of the damned, alluded to in Vol. I., p. 51.

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